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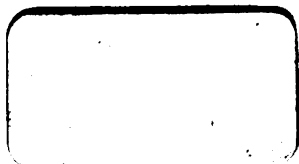
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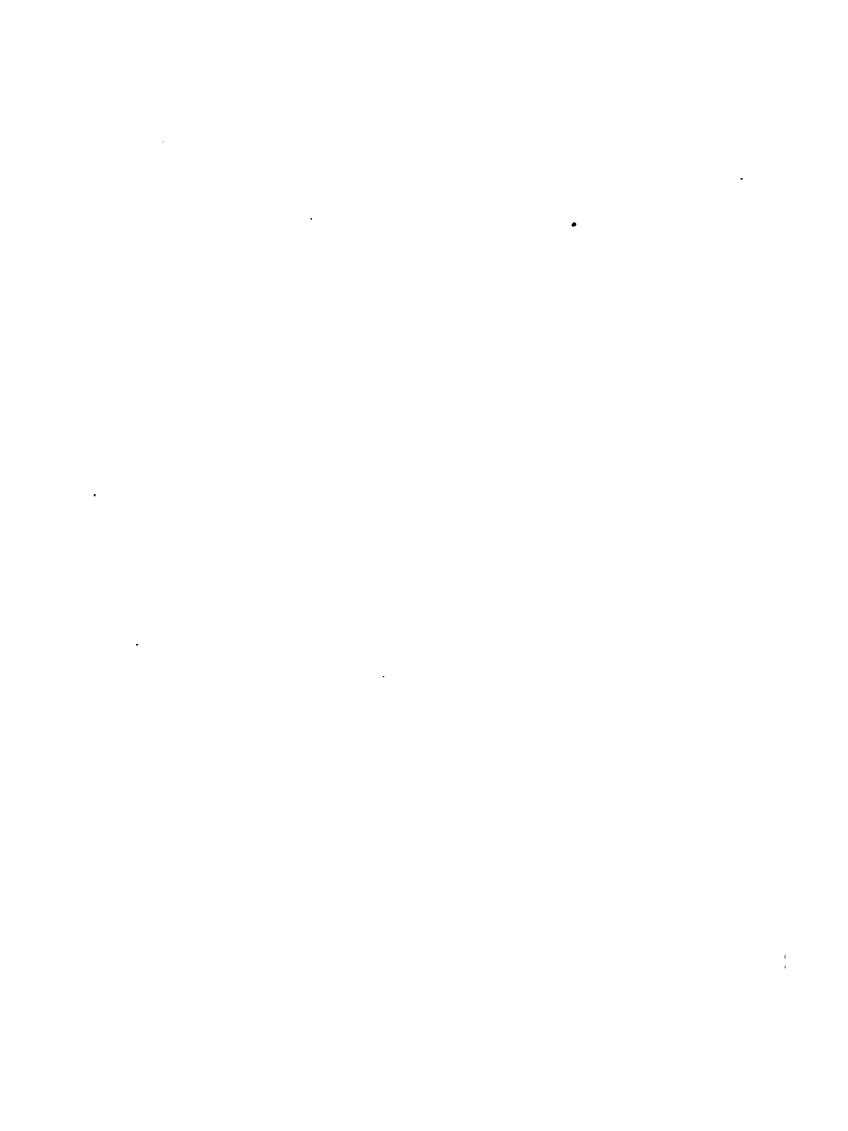
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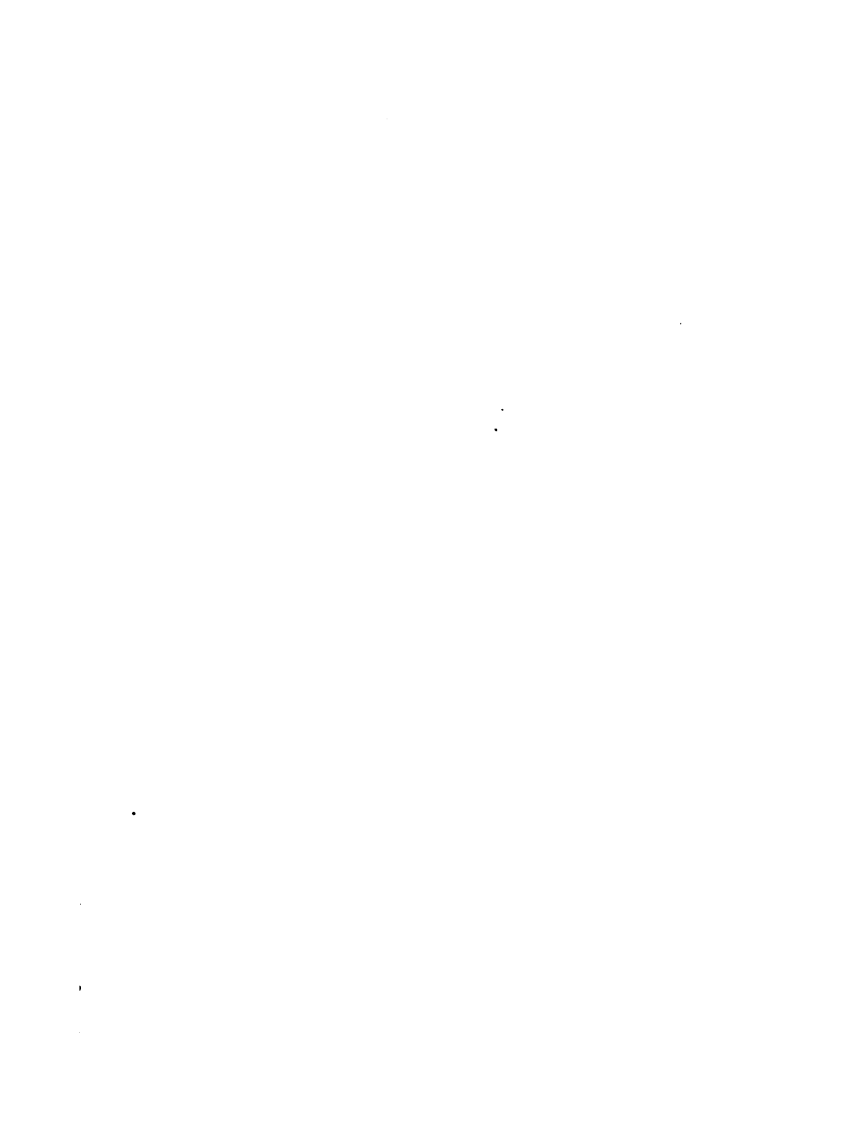
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# OUR LADY IN ART

BY  
MRS. HENRY JENNER

WITH 40 ILLUSTRATIONS



CHICAGO  
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**THE PRINCESS HILDEGARDA OF BAVARIA**



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*Riguarda omai nella faccia, ch'a Cristo  
Più si somiglia, chè la sua chiarezza  
Sola ti può disporre a veder Cristo.*

PARADISO xxxii. 85.

*Look now into the face that unto Christ  
Hath most resemblance, for its brightness only  
Is able to prepare thee to see Christ.*

LONGFELLOW'S TRANSLATION.

## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

CHRISTIAN art is an expression of man's relation to God ; thus it necessarily centres on the visible manifestation of God in the Person of His Divine Son. Mary, as the human link between God, Who is a Spirit, and the human nature which He assumed, is thus invested with an awful dignity not attainable by any other created being.

During the lifetime of her Divine Son, the rays of His glory were too dazzling to permit the light of any lesser luminary to be visible to the half-blind eyes of men. It was only after He ascended into heaven, and the clouds hid Him from sight, that men began to gather up the soft reflected rays of Him in the person of the woman who had carried Him alone and hidden during those rapturous months. There is nothing so intimate in nature as the relation of a mother and child. The more men pondered on this

mystery of God with us, the more did her personality of form come to be an object of most enthralling interest. His face, his limbs, were made of her substance, and hers alone. In a way in which no other son has ever been dependent on his mother was Christ beholden to Mary.

The most popular expression of Mary in early art was undoubtedly that of the great Intercessor. As an historical personage she occurs in the few historical subjects that were represented in early art, such as the adoration of the Magi, the Nativity, etc., and it was not until the fourth century, during the Nestorian controversy, that Mary, holding her Child, became in art the popular expression of the scriptural doctrine of the Incarnation.

The Nestorians taught that Christ was not one person, but two,—a divine being, and a human being. The Catholic Church asserts that He is one and indivisible, though in two Natures, and that 'as the reasonable soul and flesh are one man, so God and Man are one Christ.' Therefore Mary, being indisputably *Christokos*, the mother of Christ's Manhood, is of necessity entitled to be also styled *Theotokos* (Mother of God), which title was just beginning to be



## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY xvii

applied to her when it was questioned by Nestorius.

The popular expression in religious art of the Faith of the Church (after the formal establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire) was the figure of Christ Triumphant. With the break-up of the Roman empire, and the overthrow of civilisation by the inrush of Teutonic and Slavonic barbarians, amid the awful carnage and ceaseless wars of Europe, human nature had to take the most primitive, the simplest, most necessary emotion of all living creatures as its basis on which to rise to heights divine. The tenderest and the most helpless of all human creatures, a mother and a new-born child, served to awaken in rude breasts those spiritual emotions which the spectacle of Christ the Victorious Conqueror now failed to arouse.

We women who have dwelt so long in our safe and honoured position, cared for, worked for, tended by our fathers, husbands, and brothers, do not realise how much we owe our shelter and our happiness, and, dearer still, our freedom, to the rude images of Mary and her Child which formerly adorned almost every street corner and every European dwelling, and before which the greatest warrior thought it not shame, but honour, to bend his knee.

It seems in the history of Christian art as if every age occupied itself with some particular aspect of Christianity. At one time it was the symbolical, when common objects of daily use were pressed into the service of God and invested with spiritual meaning. Thus in the catacombs we find Mary with the birds clustered about her feet, as a pendant to Christ as the Good Shepherd with His sheep around Him. While Christ reigns in His glory on the walls of the Basilicas, Mary, with hands uplifted in prayer, stands beneath Him as the great Intercessor.

After the collapse of the Nestorian heresy, Mary, as the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, is seated on a heavenly throne presenting her Child to the world.

Next to the crucifix, this representation of Mary, the human mother of the Son of God, has been the most popular object in religious art. For her sake there grew up in the minds of half savage warriors that romantic, chivalrous tenderness for women and children which has been one of the most distinct and potent factors of our civilisation, as compared with all other civilisations.

While this devotion was at its height, the title of 'Our Lady' came into use. Great com-

## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY xix

munities of men arose who dedicated themselves to her honour.

The Cistercians wore white to glorify her purity, the Servites black in honour of her sorrows. The Dominicans spread the use of the rosary in her honour, and the Franciscans made themselves the champions of her immaculate conception.

In almost every church and parish in Europe were guilds in which men, women, and children enrolled themselves for her special service. Many of these confraternities built chapels, and had pictures, statues, and banners in her honour. With the multiplication of these associations and the great spread of devotion to her, there grew up naturally an intense interest in her life. By the thirteenth century, when art was more plastic, a multitude of series of pictures and carvings arose, representing her life on earth. Legends grew and multiplied, and the story of the life of Our Lady was painted and carved all over Europe as a necessary preface to the life of Christ.

The blinding blast of Mohammedanism which has swept across the East makes it difficult for us to realise the position of women before its advent, and possibly its influence has something to do with the continued decadence of Byzantine art.

Such a great subject as Byzantine art can only be briefly alluded to here. Owing to the fury of the Iconoclasts very few early specimens exist. It was only after the condemnation of the Iconoclasts, in 787, that Mary's pictures and statues were restored to their former position, and soon after this time she appears as of old, veiled and draped, with arms outspread in prayer. Art was at its lowest ebb during the following centuries, and it is to pictures of this period that the term Byzantine is usually applied.

It is interesting to refer to the Byzantine Guide to Painting, which is said to be of the tenth or eleventh century, but is probably not so early, to see what the prevailing ideas representing Mary in art were.

After the series of scenes representing the Blessed Virgin's life on earth there are directions for painting certain mystical and theological pictures of Mary. The first of these is the 'Fountain of Life,' which directs that the Divine Mother should be shown with hands uplifted and Christ in front of her. (He was usually represented in the old Greek frescoes as a diminutive figure enclosed in a vesica or circle against her breast.) Angels hold a crown above her head and scrolls with inscriptions. Under-

## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY   xxi

neath in a fountain bathe all the nations of the earth.

A long series of directions for pictures of the Holy Virgin surrounded by prophets are given, and then a curious list called 'The Salutations,' where the Holy Virgin is to be shown seated on a throne with her Child, and S. John Baptist, S. Peter, S. John Chrysostom, S. Catherine, and numerous saints surround her, each proclaiming suitable ejaculations, and above them is the garden of Paradise, with the patriarch Abraham, little children, and righteous men and women contemplating Him with joy.

The directions for representing the twenty-four stations of the Divine Mother are minute and quaint. The second is called 'The Holy Virgin looking,' and the directions say that she is to be astonished at the sight of Gabriel the archangel. Another is called 'Shining Lamp,' and represents the Holy Virgin amid the clouds carrying her Child. A great light surrounds her, whose rays pierce downwards until they illumine men kneeling in a dark grotto below who raise their eyes to her. They end with the title

*'O Mother famed throughout the Universe,'*  
and show Mary enthroned, with kings, bishops, and saints praying before her.

From the tenth century there can be said to be no development in Byzantine art. The Greek and Russian religious pictures of to-day are practically tenth century art, though in Russian art modern influence is just beginning to be felt.

Though there undoubtedly exists a traditional type of Christ, there has never been any continuous type of Mary's appearance. She has always been represented in art as the ideal woman of the nation and period, though there existed a description of her person in the fourth century which was said to have been obtained by tradition. This occurs in the works of Epiphanius Monachus, who says, 'She was of middle stature; her face oval; her eyes brilliant and of an olive tint; her eyebrows arched and black; her hair was of a pale brown; her complexion fair. She spoke little, but she spoke freely and affably; she was not troubled in her speech, but grave, courteous, tranquil. Her dress was without ornament, and in her deportment was nothing lax or feeble.'

In a description of Christ from the same source the hair is stated to be golden coloured, and the eyes tawny and flashing, and he adds that Christ closely resembled His Mother. Another account speaks of the hair as 'golden' or 'wine coloured,'

## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY xxiii

so probably the hair of both was of that golden ruddy shade so rare and so peculiarly beautiful. All accounts agree in the brilliant flashing eyes, apparently what we call hazel eyes, which are grey, or black, or golden, according to the emotion of the person.

In no early art is Mary represented as of a distinctively Jewish type.

To this description of her person may be added the scriptural portrait of her mind. Her purity, gentleness, fortitude, and humility, her intellectual grasp of her position, her elevation of soul, her poetic insight as revealed in the Magnificat; her energy and promptness and wisdom as shown by her visit to S. Elisabeth; her tenderness of heart and sympathy, and her trust in her Divine Son, exemplified in her thoughtfulness for the straitened circumstances of the young couple in Cana; her heroic fortitude and silent anguish as she stood at the foot of the cross,—all these and many other aspects of Mary have been in all ages the themes of painters and sculptors.

As there has not been any traditional portrait of Mary that has come down from her time, it has been left to artists to represent her, as we have said, as the ideal lady of their time and country. In Roman art she is the majestic, digni-

fied, calm, strong and intense Roman matron, whose one thought is for the good of her children. In Greek art she is not so much the mother as the Queen, the Empress, the great crowned lady; severe, remote, immovable, faultless, and serene, qualities which eventually fall into hard lifelessness. This Byzantine type of Mary existed all through the Middle Ages, down to the revival of art in Europe, and still goes on in Russia and Greece. In Siena something of the awful remoteness of the Greek Goddess lingered even in the passionate sweetness and absorbing tender devotion of the most mystical Madonnas in art.

In North Italy, on the contrary, Mary seems to have sprung to life amid the lilies of the Della Robbias and the roses of the Lippis, and the lovely landscapes of the Umbrians. Though there is still an air of mystical aloofness and the majesty of the high heavens in the Madonnas of Bellini, Crivelli, Mantegna, and Lorenzo di Credi, among the fruitful plains Mary at last descends to earth, and Raphael's robust peasant woman clasping her Child in her arms is the peasant woman of the fields, to be varied by the cultured pretty ladies of the boudoir of Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Ferrari, and the frivolous girl of Correggio.



## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY xxv

In Germany and the Netherlands the same process resulted in the mystical noble Maries of Memling, and the coarse 'haus-fraus' of Dürer and Rembrandt. The natural result of the teaching of the German Reformers, that it was pleasing to Christ to despise His Mother, led, of course, to the Northern schools of art ceasing to paint her at all, until quite recent times.

As art in the West had once before been stifled under Byzantine influence, so when the Renaissance came the love and admiration of Mary was turned by that irruption of Greek art and learning into practical paganism.

In popular art (which is always the expression of the real ideas of the people) Mary sank from 'full of grace,' 'the Handmaid of the Lord,' into a romping, trivial young woman, or a gorgeously decked-out goddess. Mary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was thought most pleasing as a fashionable beauty, or a stupid peasant woman.

In the sixteenth century the reign of taste supplanted the reign of religion, and Mary became (as Christ became) merely a name for a studio model, and the real object of the picture was an exhibition of the painter's skill in conforming to the new canons of taste. Only in Spain do we

find painters after this time preferring to invest their Madonnas with any spiritual meaning.

In the seventeenth century the brothers Carracci and their school made an attempt to go back to the ideals of a former age, but neither religion nor religious art can go backwards, without becoming a hollow imitation with no inherent life of its own.

If religion is to be judged by art, the record of the last two centuries shows it to be rather in a bad way, for few indeed have been the pictures painted that could in any sense be termed religious pictures.

The sickly sentimentalities of modern French religious pictures reveal the degeneracy of that part of French art to a very painful degree to any one who compares these simpering affected Marias with the tender and exquisite sculptures of Rheims. There is a fourteenth century statue at one of the corners of the Cathedral in which Mary is so full of joy over her Child that her whole being laughs with rapture of delight. It is the most joyous conception of Our Lady that the hand of man has wrought. The simpering affectation of popular French religious art, with a few exceptions, is indeed far removed from this tender, dignified, joyous Lady of Rheims.

## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY xxvii

In modern German art Mary is neither mystical nor symbolic, often sad and serious, but more frequently she is the sentimental peasant woman.

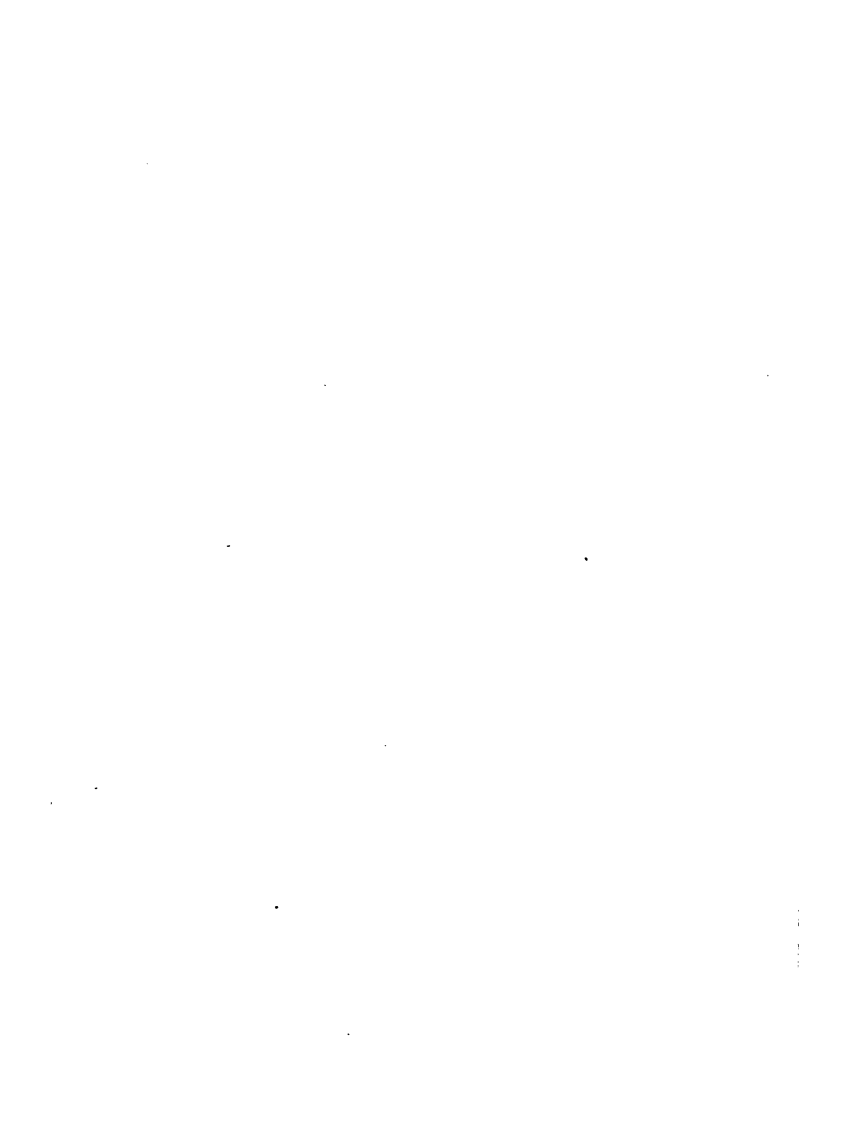
In modern English art Burne-Jones's neurotic Mary and Rossetti's singularly plain girl are among the best-known examples. Why these artists and Millais unite in making the 'most favoured among women' so ugly, I leave to their shades to explain, if possible. To me it seems wantonly inexcusable.

In so small a work as this, a brief and wholly inadequate summary of art, even in this one aspect of Mary, is all that can even be attempted. It would require many volumes to give even a sketch of a subject which has enthralled artists for close on two thousand years. However contemptuous the majority of English people may feel on the subject of the veneration paid to Mary, the fact remains that ever since Christianity began, Mary, the Mother of the Lord (who gave her thirty years out of the three and thirty of His life) has been an object of the deepest, tenderest love and worship. Had Mary not given her consent to God's scheme of redemption, doubtless He could and would have redeemed the world by some other means. As she did give the consent of her will, she is a participator in that redemp-

## xxviii      OUR LADY IN ART

tion, and art being one of the manifestations of the spirit and mind of man, Mary has occupied a unique place in art as in religion. Pictures are worth little unless they emanate from the soul of the artist. At the present time the emotion of the western world finds its readiest expression in literature rather than in religious art, and for the present it is not likely that any great picture of Our Lady or her Divine Son will appear. So it will be fitting to conclude this very slight sketch of some characteristics of the religious art of the past with the words of one of the few of our great English poets who have sung of the Mother of God.

‘Seraph of Heaven ! too gentle to be human.  
Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman  
All that is unsupportable in thee  
Of light, and love, and immortality !  
Sweet Benediction in the eternal curse !  
Veil'd glory of this lampless Universe !  
Thou moon beyond the clouds ! Thou living Form  
Among the Dead ! Thou star above the storm !  
Thou Wonder and Thou Beauty, and thou Terror !  
Thou harmony of Nature's art ! Thou Mirror  
In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,  
All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on !’





OUR LADY AS INTERCESSOR  
*From a basso-relief in S. Mark's, Venice*

# OUR LADY IN ART

## CHAPTER I

### OUR LADY IN EARLY ART AS THE GREAT INTER- CESSOR—THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

**T**HE earliest representations of the Blessed Virgin do not emphasise the aspect of her Maternity so much as that of her office of Intercessor. An instance which illustrates this view is found on a very early sarcophagus, where Mary stands between SS. Peter and Paul, who both support her uplifted arms.

In all early art where she is represented as a single figure she is shown as the Intercessor—the spiritual Mother who is perpetually praying for her children given her at the foot of the Cross. It is only when she is holding her Son that her office of Intercessor ceases. There is an awful quietness and stateliness about these early figures of Mary. She is always amply draped and veiled. Often the Cross, or a star, is embroidered on

her mantle. Her arms are invariably uplifted in prayer. Mary interceding is the Mary of the first six centuries.

In all these early figures Mary stands with arms extended in prayer. This idea is carried on into the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, when mosaics take the place of rude painting and gold-etching, and Mary, a colossal figure, grand, mysterious, and glorious, stands only second to Christ, praying for the children given to her by Him.

In the oratory of S. Venantius in the Lateran is one of these great conceptions, the work of Greek artists of about the year A.D. 642. She stands immediately beneath the figure of Christ over the altar in the vault of the tribune, SS. Peter, Paul, John the Baptist, and John the Evangelist on each side of her. In Ravenna is one of the Greek sixth-century conceptions of Mary in a bas-relief in S. Maria-in-Porto. She stands in the traditional attitude with upraised hands. There is a fine flow in the drapery, which has not yet become meaningless, and the face is of the best Greek type, noble and beautiful.

When we come to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we find the same general characteristics which have passed through the dead period of Byzantine art and are beginning to be endowed with a touch of life. Thus in the Spoleto mosaic





OUR LADY AS THE GREAT INTERCESSOR  
*From a mosaic in the Archiepiscopal Palace, Ravenna*



## THE GREAT INTERCESSOR 3

of 1209, her head is turned and one hand brought across her breast. A little later, in a mosaic of about 1287, in the apse of S. John Lateran, while one hand is lifted in prayer, she places the other on the head of a diminutive figure of Pope Nicholas IV., who is kneeling beside her.

In a twelfth-century Byzantine dalmatic in the sacristy of S. Peter's at Rome, Our Lady stands within the glory which encircles her Son. After this period it is rare to find full-length figures of Our Lady without her Child, unless she is seated on a throne.

The Madonna standing alone with the Holy Dove hovering over her, and surrounded by saints, by Piero di Cosimo, in the Uffizi at Florence, is an unusual and strictly theological picture. In the background are the 'Nativity' and the 'Flight into Egypt.' Mary's importance in the scheme of Redemption is emphasised in this picture much after the manner of the early mosaics in S. Maria Maggiore, where all humanity culminates in the Word brought into the world by the 'Fiat voluntas tua' of Mary.

It was as the painter of the pure, perfect Lady that Simone Martini excelled. Mary is everything exquisitely good, tender, delicate, and gentle. Nowhere is she so womanly as in Siena. She neither holds herself aloof in majesty as with

Cimabue and the Byzantine school, nor is she so massively human as the Florentines and northern painters portray her.

In the Council Hall at Siena Simone is to be seen at his best. The Queen of Heaven sits amid the saints and angels. All is permeated with a beauty so strange, so subtle, so overpowering that Sir Martin Conway speaks of this picture as not so much the conception of an individual as the faith of a community, 'that in the unseen world there dwells a higher than the highest earthly powers, robed in guilelessness and clothed with pity, restraining the tyranny of the strong and dominating the counsels of the proud—in fact, that there is a God above and that the hearts of kings are in His Hand.'

Another very interesting early enthroned Madonna is the Virgin of the Campo Santo in Pisa. She is a sweet and simple maiden seated on a throne and extending her hand to a Saint, who is presented to her by SS. Peter and Paul. Signorelli has a majestic figure of Mary as Queen of Patriarchs on the roof of Orvieto Cathedral, a grand group of Patriarchs surrounding her.

As 'Regina Coeli' there are numerous pictures of Mary receiving the homage of the angels, and there is also a large class of pictures, mostly half-length figures of Mary crowned, many of ancient

## THE GREAT INTERCESSOR 5

origin, or copies of earlier Greek works. In later times the crown is dispensed with and she is merely veiled, and her face expresses all the beauty and tenderness the artist is capable of rendering. Here she is merely Mary the Blessed, without any special attributes, and these pictures frequently degenerate in later art into merely pretty simpering female heads, which might be any studio model. The mystery of the lofty Intercessor of the early Church is quite lost sight of.

There are a number of small half-length pictures of Our Lady representing her as a young girl with flowing hair, chiefly by Spanish and Italian artists, and a still larger number of heads with blue drapery veiling her; the features matronly, the eyes suffused with tears, and the whole face expressive of the deepest sorrow. These pictures may be entitled respectively 'La Madonna Purissima' and 'La Madre Dolorosa,'—the Virgin most pure, and the Mother of Sorrows. Guido and Murillo excelled in these often very beautiful little pictures.

By the early seventeenth century we get the old idea of the sanctification of Mary fully developed into the complete acceptance of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and a wholly new class of pictures arose,

One reason why pictures of the Immaculate Conception have been so exceedingly popular is because they represent in a single form the Eternal Hope of the human race.

From the early ages of Christianity the Fathers of the Church saw the necessity for the co-operation of the human race in the work of redemption. Christ as God could not be His own instrument. He required man's acceptance of His design. Mary's 'Fiat voluntas tua' was Humanity's free-will acceptance of God's design.

It was not permissible to imagine that Christ as God could take upon Himself a body of sin. His human nature must be perfect human nature as God created it in the beginning of the world. Therefore she of whom His body was formed must be untouched by sin, born without that blight of original sin, the curse of Adam.

This recognition of the sinless conception of Mary as the instrument which should link Humanity to God required time for its development. We find the germ of the idea in the works of the early fathers of the Church,<sup>1</sup> but until the seventh century it had not become a popular doctrine. During the eleventh century an English monk, S. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, instituted a festival in its honour,

<sup>1</sup> S. Augustine, S. Ambrose, S. Cyril, Origen, S. Cyprrian.

## THE GREAT INTERCESSOR 7

but though the doctrine grew more and more popular the Church did not formally ratify the festival until 1615, though it was in the English Prayer-Book in 1552.

The idea expressed in the pictures of the Immaculate Conception is, so to speak, Mary as she existed from all ages in the mind of the Eternal Father. She is the supreme excellence of Humanity, the highest point touched by the human race. As there is no question of *age* in eternities such as souls, Mary is represented at the perfection of bodily age, that condition in which it is permissible to believe our glorified bodies will exist after the Resurrection, when growth has ceased, and no decay set in, that one moment of perfect poise between advance and retrogression.

Pacheco, who was art censor for the Inquisition in 1649, laid down rules in his *Arte della Pintura* for painters to follow. Mary was to be portrayed as a young maiden in the bloom of youth, 'with grave sweet eyes, her hair golden, her features with all the beauty painting can express, her hands to be folded on her bosom, or joined in prayer. The moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars around her head. Her robe of spotless white, her scarf or mantle of blue, cherubim and angels bearing roses, lilies, and

palms should hover round her. The head of the dragon to be under her feet.'

The majority of artists followed these rules, with occasional deviations. Many of them also introduced the Franciscan cord, in honour of a vision of Mary Immaculate to a noble Franciscan nun. The Franciscans have ever been the great promoters of this doctrine.

The best artists have represented Mary in the first bloom of young womanhood, occasionally as a child, but this is not so orthodox a conception. The description in the Apocalypse of the woman clothed with the sun and having the moon under her feet and a crown of stars, is held to be a description of what might be called the essence of Mary, the consummation of the second Eve, who undoes the work of the first Eve.

Idealism can go no farther in art than the portraying of this mystery, for the pictures are not of Mary as she was at any one moment of her beautiful girlhood, but Mary, as God's perfected work, as it exists in His Eternal Conception.

Murillo is the painter *par excellence* of these highly idealistic pictures. The doctrine has ever been a favourite one in Spain, and its great painter placed no fewer than twenty-five different versions of his vision on canvas. In his great picture at







THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
*From the painting by Murillo in the Prado, Madrid*

## THE GREAT INTERCESSOR 9

Madrid, where Mary is upborne by angels, she really seems to float above the world and to be rising up to that Beatific Vision, towards which her lovely face is set.

In another picture of his in the museum at Seville she is younger, not more than fourteen. Her hands are clasped, her dark eyes uplifted, she is borne upon the crescent moon amidst the clouds up into eternal space. She is above even the moon and stars in another picture, and the Eternal Father awaits her with outstretched arms, a variation which has little to commend it.

Velasquez has a small picture of this subject, in which he departs from the usual colouring of white robe and pale blue drapery, for he arrays her in pale violet and dark blue. It is one of his early pictures, and is remarkable for the depth of expression in the fair round face.

Before Murillo's day Roelas painted a fine 'Conception,' now in Seville, and there is another fine picture by Lazaro Tavarone in the Esterhazy Gallery at Vienna. In former days there was scarcely a house in Spain which did not contain a picture or carving representing the guileless Mary of Grace. It is in Spanish art we find the most beautiful, intelligible, and attractive pictures of this mystery, and the most theologically correct. At the time when this doctrine

was most popular the decline of religious feeling in Italy produced pictures more sentimental than devotional, and more concerned with the problems of foreshortening and anatomy than with doctrinal significance.

The finest efforts of Guido were expended in his four pictures of the Immaculate Conception, of which one is in the possession of Lord Ellesmere. Mary crowned with stars is standing on a crescent upheld by cherubs. Her hands are folded, and she is gazing up in adoration as she floats between heaven and earth. Another great picture was painted for Pope Paul v., and is now in St. Petersburg. The Virgin in spotless white is seated in glory in the heavens, while below are Fathers of the Church consulting their books in defence of the doctrine of her spotless purity.

## CHAPTER II

### ATTRIBUTES AND SYMBOLS—TITLES—VOTIVE PICTURES

AS the earliest representations of the Blessed Virgin were theological statements in form and colour, so the use of symbols became a necessity for the elucidation of the ideas.

The first of these attributes or symbols was the star, either over her head, as on the catacomb of S. Domitilla, or embroidered in her mantle. 'Stella Matutina,' the Morning Star, is one of her titles, in allusion to her being the first redeemed of the human race. 'Stella Maris' is one interpretation of her name, and under this title she is the Patroness of sailors. (מָאֹר־יָם) The Light of the Sea. מָאֹר is used in Genesis i. 14, for the Lights set in heaven. The real meaning of Miriam, Μαρίαμ in N.T., is probably מֵרִיָּם, amaritudo maris.) When the twelve stars surround her head, it is in allusion to the text in

the Apocalypse, of the woman with the crown of twelve stars. The number twelve is supposed to allude to the Apostles.

From the same text in the Apocalypse the sun and moon are used as attributes of Mary. The crescent moon also symbolised her perpetual purity and chastity, and as such is introduced into pictures of the Immaculate Conception. It also frequently occurs under her feet in pictures where she is holding her Divine Child.

The globe placed under her feet and encircled by the serpent, represents the world and sin vanquished by the Redemption.

From the Song of Solomon many images have been borrowed which express in a poetical manner certain qualities, such as her purity, in *the enclosed garden, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed*. Many artists, notably Filippino Lippi, Francia, and Botticelli have expressed this idea by a blossoming palisade of roses in the background; with the Northern artists the enclosure is generally bare sticks, or a wall.

From the same source Mary is called *The Rose of Sharon, The Lily of the Valley, The Cedar of Lebanon, The Tower of David*. In an especial manner all flowers were dedicated to Mary, but the Rose and the Lily are among her particular emblems. In pictures of the Annunciation it is

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the general rule to find tall white lilies, either in the hand of the angel or in a vase by the Virgin's side, and they are there as emblems of her purity.

When flowers are used as wreaths encircling Mary's throne, or as covering the ground beneath her feet, or when angels bring them, they are then mere accessories, and expressive of the blossoming of the world of grace and beauty, or the flowers of the Holy Spirit, which grew in her, as in a garden of grace, and are by her placed within reach of a sinful world. The custom of offering flowers to Mary still exists in all Catholic countries as expressive of her children's gratitude. May, the month of flowers, has in quite modern times been especially dedicated to her, the Christian Flora, and little girls wear garlands of flowers on their heads and strew flowers before her statue in the month of May. She is the Ceres of the spiritual life, the Flower of humanity, the Blossom in the dry place.

The Olive is another of the special attributes of Mary, and has had from the earliest days a mystical significance. Simone Martini's most exquisite 'Annunciation' shows the angel bearing the olive branch of peace from heaven to earth.

Ears of wheat and clusters of grapes signify the mystery of the Eucharist.

Fruits are used as emblems of the fruits of the

Spirit, love, joy, peace, etc. The Pomegranate is the old emblem of hope, and of fruitfulness, the 'Virginitas fecunda' of the Christmas Collect, and is frequently introduced in pictures of the Mother of Divine Hope. The apple signifies the Fall of man, and is placed near the second Eve, sometimes in her hand, sometimes in her Child's hand, sometimes encircling her in garlands about her throne.

The Dove is the emblem of the Holy Spirit, and generally flies towards Our Lady in pictures of the Annunciation, but is frequently shown brooding over her as when it 'moved upon the face of the waters.'

Seven Doves hover round her head in pictures which represent her as Mater Sapientiae, the Mother of Wisdom, and they represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, the Fear of the Lord.

In their ancient significance birds were emblems of the soul. They are very frequently represented in the Catacombs. In one very early fresco Mary is shown as a veiled figure feeding the birds about her feet, while Christ as the Good Shepherd feeds the sheep of His flock. The peacock was especially the symbol of Eternity. Gradually this special association of birds with



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the idea of soul or spirit (originating possibly in the mention of the Spirit of God 'brooding over the face of the waters,' and of the Holy Ghost appearing in the form of a Dove) was neglected, and in the later pictures birds were mere ornamental accessories.

Two meanings are attached to a *book*. When it is closed and sealed it represents Mary herself. When it is open it is the Book of Wisdom, and open at the seventh chapter.

Those numerous pictures called 'Sedes Sapientiae,' which represent Mary reading, are mystical representations of Mary as the seat of Wisdom, and she is reading the words, 'For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty ; therefore can no defiled thing fall into her, for she is the brightness of the everlasting Light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness.'

Prophets and Sibyls frequently attend on Our Lady in art, chiefly those who referred to the Incarnation and who have a mystical association with her ; such as Moses, who saw the burning bush, which burnt and was not consumed, in allusion to her through whom God passed ; Isaiah, who prophesied that a 'virgin should conceive and bare a son' ; Ezekiel, 'This gate shall be shut,

it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it, because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.' (Ezekiel xliv. 2,) in allusion to her perpetual virginity ; David as ancestor and prophet ; Gideon, whose fleece was wet with the dew of heaven when all the earth was dry ; Aaron, whose rod broke forth into blossom. So identified were these men of old with Mary, who fulfilled their words, that sometimes only their attributes are introduced instead of themselves, for the spectator was supposed to know the Old Testament Prophets, and a mere hint was all that was necessary.

Besides the prophets certain women of the Old Testament were regarded as types of Mary. Eve first of all, as Mary was the second Eve ; Ruth, as the ancestress of the house of David, of which she was born ; Rachel as the ideal of the contemplative life, 'she hid these things in her heart' ; Judith and Esther, the deliverers of their people, thus the prototype of the Deliverer of Israel. These Hebrew women and Abishag, Bathsheba, and others occur in old pictures as round or beneath the throne of the Virgin. Evangelists, apostles, and saints occur in either mystical, theological, or devotional pictures in a variety of ways. Sometimes as expressing a particular doctrine, or as the patron saints of a country or church, or

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the special patrons of the painter or donor, or as the objects of special devotion. They differ in time and country, and according to popular feeling, and their variety is endless.

The most constant attendants of all on Our Lady in art are naturally the angels. They hover around her in the air, they support her feet when she is lifted in ecstasy above the earth. They play angelic music to her as she sits in contemplation on the throne. They adore and wait on her Divine Child, sometimes support Him while she bends over Him. They welcome her in the Heavens when she is drawn upwards by her love of God to join her risen Son. They escort her on her journey when she flies with her Child from the fury of the heathen. In some lovely little 'Riposi' the angels help her wash and hang out her Child's linen. They bring her fruit and flowers. In an exquisite 'Flight into Egypt' in the Vatican Galleries an angel bends the branch of a tree out of her way as she rides past. Cherubim surround her as she prays, and Seraphim encircle her with love. All music was under the protection of Mary, and angels singing or playing are among the most poetic and beautiful accessories in numerous pictures of our Lady.

Among the multitudes of titles evolved for

Our Lady out of the needs of suffering humanity, the following are among the commonest :—

*Mater Dolorosa*, Our Lady of Sorrows ; *S. Maria Consolatrice*, Our Lady of Consolation ; *S. Maria delle Grazie*, Our Lady of Graces ; *S. Maria del Soccorse*, Our Lady of Succour ; *S. Maria di Misericordia*, Our Lady of Mercy ; *S. Maria de los Dolores*, Our Lady of Sorrows ; *S. Maria della Speranza*, Our Lady of Hope ; *S. Maria della Vittoria*, Our Lady of Victory ; *S. Maria della Pace*, Our Lady of Peace.

These are a few out of the great number of the loving names bestowed by her children on their mother, and are common to all. She is invoked more especially under the following titles :—

*S. Maria della Sapienza*, Our Lady of Wisdom, and *S. Maria della Perseveranza*, Our Lady of Perseverance, by scholars and children in schools. *S. Maria della Salute*, Our Lady of Health, in times of plague and sickness. *S. Maria della Libertà*, Our Lady of Liberty, by prisoners and captives. *Mater Admirabilis*, by the children of the schools of the Sacred Heart, in commemoration of a picture in the Sacred Heart Convent of the Trinità del Monte in Rome. *S. Maria del Fiore*, Our Lady of the Flower, as the protectress of the city of Florence. *S. Maria della Spina*, Our Lady of the Thorn, as the pro-

tectress of the city of Pisa, which holds as its dearest treasure a thorn from the crown of thorns. *S. Maria del Rosario*, Our Lady of the Rosary. As *S. Maria del Carmine*, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, she is the patroness of the order of the Carmelites. *S. Maria del Parto*, Our Lady of Good Delivery, invoked by women in travail. As *S. Maria de Belem*, Our Lady of Bethlehem, she is patroness of the Jeronymites. *S. Maria di Loreto*, Our Lady of Loreto.

There are so many titles of Our Lady, derived from pictures, that it would be almost impossible to make a list of them. *S. Maria della Colonna*, Our Lady of the Column; *S. Maria delle Rocce*, Our Lady of the Rocks, from Leonardo's picture now in our National Gallery; *S. Maria del Presipio*, Our Lady of the Cradle, which is applied to pictures of the Nativity where Our Lady is adoring her Child; *S. Maria della Cintola*, Our Lady of the Girdle, alluding to the legend of her dropping her girdle to S. Thomas, when his doubting disposition led him to doubt her Assumption; *S. Maria della Rosa*, Our Lady of the Rose. As the Rose of Sharon Our Lady has the rose dedicated to her, and it is frequently introduced into pictures of her and her Child. *S. Maria del Libro*, Our Lady of the Book, where she holds the Book of Wisdom.

The titles bestowed on Our Lady in the Litany of Loretto, so commonly recited in Catholic Churches at Benediction, are also used as titles for pictures. *S. Dei Genetrix, S. Virgo virginum, Mater Amabilis, Rosa Mystica, Stella Matulina, Regina Angelorum, Regina Martyrum, Regina Patriarcharum, Regina Sacratissimi Rosarii*, and numerous others.

The fifteen mysteries of the Rosary are:—

**The joyful Mysteries—**

The Annunciation.

The Visitation.

The Nativity.

The Presentation.

The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.

**The sorrowful Mysteries:—**

The Prayer of Our Lord in the Garden.

The Scourging at the Pillar.

The Crowning with Thorns.

The Carrying of the Cross.

The Crucifixion.

**The glorious Mysteries—**

The Resurrection of our Lord.

The Ascension.

The Descent of the Holy Ghost.

## ATTRIBUTES AND SYMBOLS 27

The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven.

The Coronation of Our Lady and the glory of all the saints in Heaven.

There are not very many pictures of Our Lady of the Rosary. Among the most remarkable is the one by Albert Dürer in the Strahow Monastery at Prague, and Murillo's two pictures, one in the Pitti Palace, and a finer one in the Prado, where the Child's attitude as He stands on His Mother's knee is very beautiful.

In the popular art of the Middle Ages the Seven Joys and Sorrows of Our Lady were frequently carved and painted, and later on engraved. The Joys were—the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation in the Temple, the Finding of Christ in the Temple, the Assumption, the Coronation.

The Seven Sorrows :—The Prophecy of Simeon, the Flight into Egypt, the Losing of Christ on the journey from the Temple, the Betrayal of Christ, the Crucifixion, the Deposition from the Cross, the Ascension.

This arrangement is chiefly found on carved screens in churches, in windows, in books of devotion, and in the cheapest, most popular art of the Middle Ages.

As *Virgo Sapientiae* Our Lady has appeared in

numerous great pictures, notably in that fine altarpiece of the Van Eycks, where she is seated on a heavenly throne studying the Book of Wisdom. She wears the magnificent jewelled clothing of her whose 'garments were of wrought gold,' and her long fair hair ripples over her shoulders beneath the heavenly diadem.

Another version of the same subject is by Piero di Cosimo, where Mary, simply clothed, stands on a pedestal surrounded by adoring saints. Her face is uplifted towards the Holy Dove floating above her.

Raphael seats her beside her Son in glory in his great fresco of *La Disputa del Sacramento* in the Vatican, and numerous pictures of her exist seated in her meek love beside her Son in heaven.

There is a large class of pictures representing Mary as the Mother of Mercy, and Mother of sinners, in which, as a colossal figure, she stands with her wide robes extended over her kneeling suppliants. Such pictures were often painted for orphanages and convents, or for other charitable houses. There is a bas-relief over the Scuola di Carità in Venice, showing the brothers gathered under her robe. Piero della Francesca painted a picture for the Hospital of Borgo San Sepolcro, showing the sick gathered under her protecting





VIRGO SAPIENTIAE

*From the painting by the Van Eycks in the Church of  
St. Bavo, Ghent*



## ATTRIBUTES AND SYMBOLS 23

mantle. As a general rule it has not been so often treated by the great artists as by the lesser ones, for it was emphatically a people's subject, and numberless are the poor pictures and cheap prints that show the Virgin in this benign aspect. To come to quite modern times, there is a most beautiful piece of sculpture in the chapel of the Visitation nuns at Harrow, showing the young girls, in whom the nuns take such a tender interest, gathered under the wide mantle of Our Lady of Pity.

There are many votive pictures which were painted as thanksgivings for special mercies received, as the 'Madonna del Voto' of Siena, which was painted to commemorate the placing of Siena under her protection during the war with Florence. Matteo di Giovanni painted a fine votive Madonna as a thanksgiving for her intercession in time of pestilence. S. Cosmas and S. Damian, the two great canonised physicians, kneel before her. In pictures of this class S. Roch, S. Sebastian, and S. George are frequently introduced, who were all regarded as protectors in times of sickness. There is a fine picture of Titian's in the Vatican, painted after the staying of the plague in Venice, in gratitude to Our Lady, where she smilingly holds her Child amid angels holding garlands. Correggio has a

famous picture painted for Modena in 1515, after the cessation of the plague there.

‘A great earthquake visited Bologna in June 1505, and much damage was done; the city sent up a great cry for assistance,’ says the old chronicler, and ‘Our Lady interceded, and the quaking was stopped.’

Francia was asked by the commune of his native town to commemorate this deliverance by Our Lady’s intercession, and he painted a fresco in the dining-hall of the Podestà Comunale representing the town of Bologna with its walls and towers surrounded by hills, and overhead in the sky a figure of the Mother of God, holding her Divine Child, blessing the city. The record is an exceedingly interesting one, as it shows the wonderful effect of the groups of tall, slender Lombardic towers, and the general appearance of the city at that time.

Fra Bartolommeo’s masterpiece, which he painted for the church of S. Romano at Lucca, is typical of these votive pictures of Our Lady, offered in thanksgiving for her intercession. She is represented here with outstretched arms, her face turned heavenwards full of yearning entreaty for the plague-stricken multitude at her feet. Her voluminous mantle, symbolising her pity and charity, is upheld by angels, and shelters under



OUR LADY OF MERCY

*From the painting by Fra Bartolommeo in the Church of St. Romano, Lucca*



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its wide folds the suppliants who plead to her.

More numerous still are the pictures of Our Lady of Mercy holding her Divine Child in her arms, and surrounded by saints. These became so popular in the great period of Italian art that they may be said to represent the predominating religious feeling of the day. They have a wide range, from the greatest painters to the cheapest coloured woodcut, or bit of stamped metal, and abound in great galleries, churches, and the lowest peasant huts.

*La Madonna della Vittoria*, Our Lady of Victory, generally has some of the warrior saints introduced. Andrea Mantegna has a fine picture showing Our Lady seated amid saints on a throne with her Child on her knee, which was painted in celebration of the victory claimed by Granfrancesco di Gonzaga of Mantua over the French at Fornovo in 1495.

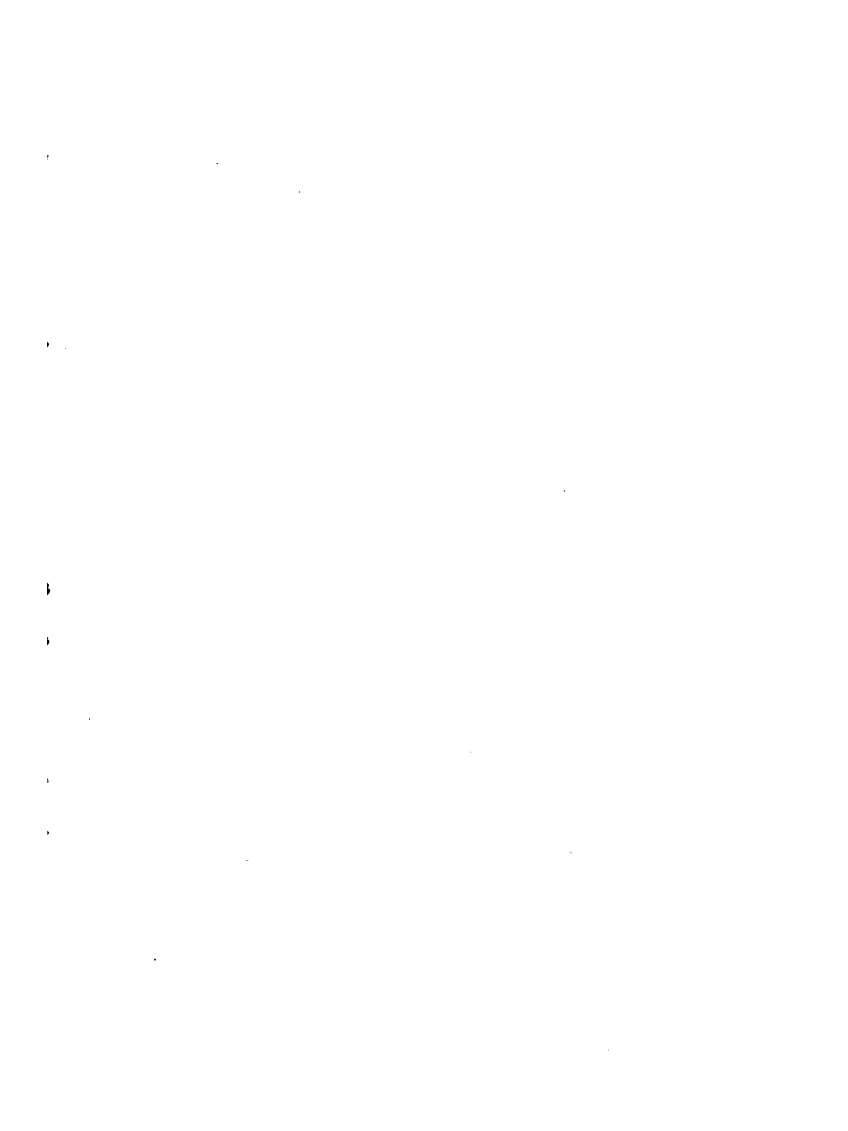
Besides the numerous votive pictures which commemorate public events, there is a large class of pictures painted as thank-offerings by private families. One of the best known of these is the Madonna of Jacob Meyer, Burgomaster of Basle, by Hans Holbein the younger (Grand-ducal Castle, Darmstadt). This stately figure of Our Lady, whose wide mantle envelopes in its sheltering

folds the devout figures of Master Meyer and his family, is holding what seems to be the little sick child in her arms with a lovely maternal air of protection, while the child rests its little head with a contentment past expression on her breast. The devout Burgo-master looks up with prayerful gratitude while his elder son holds the restored child, a very childish playful figure catching the sunshine. The women are stiff in their grave-like headdresses, and the younger girl in her marvellously painted soft white dress is rendered hideous by her ungainly coiffure.

Mrs. Jameson speaks of a fine altar-piece by Guido, which represents Our Lady standing by her dead Son, with her eyes, full of infinite anguish, raised to heaven. Below is a group of saints imploring her to intercede for their city of Bologna. This picture was placed as an act of penance and piety in the church of S. Maria della Pietà. 'It hung there,' she says, 'for two centuries, for the consolation of the afflicted; it is now placed in the academy of Bologna for the admiration of connoisseurs.'

There is a curious panel in an oak triptych in the church at Llanellian, near Conway, said to be of pre-Norman date, which represents an angel holding a balance weighing a soul. The devil tries to press it down, but Mary, vested as a







THE VISION OF S. BERNARD

*From the painting by Filippino Lippi at Florence*

## ATTRIBUTES AND SYMBOLS 27

queen, throws a garland of roses over the side and frustrates the enemy.

A mystical subject which has been most beautifully treated by at least two great artists is the vision of S. Bernard.

In Perugino's picture in the old Pinakothek, Munich, S. Bernard is seated at his desk in a colonnade with wide arches in perspective, stretching towards the sunny hills. Mary, attended by two wingless angels, appears before him as he is writing of her glories. She stands in the well-known Perugino attitude, with one foot slightly raised, and her sweet face a little bent towards the devout monk.

Filippino Lippi seats S. Bernard amid a wild landscape, and Mary, most spiritual, most ethereal in her sad and wistful loveliness, stands before him. It is one of the most spiritualised Madonnas ever painted, in spite of the artist's limitations as to technique, and his hard, serious rendering of solid facts of earthly detail in accessories.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE VIRGIN AND CHILD IN EARLY ART—EN- THRONED MADONNAS

THE attempt to classify such a host of pictures as those of the Blessed Virgin and her Child reveals such an immense divergence of feeling and intention, that it seems as if scarcely any human emotion is unrepresented in this most popular subject. To trace their historical sequence would fill a book, for the characteristics of every age can be read in the effigies of Mary and her Son.

Probably the earliest example that exists is that vigorous fresco in the catacomb of S. Priscilla in Rome. Judging from inscriptions on its walls the date is said to be almost of apostolic times, and the life and elegance of the painting are so classical that its date must be before the disappearance of Roman classical art. Mary's action, as she bends over the Child she holds to her, is full of life and

grace. Her soft hair is seen beneath a gauzy veil, her attitude is startlingly lifelike, and that of the Child as He clings to her and at the same moment turns His head to gaze at the spectator is so natural and infantine that there is scarcely another such infant between this picture and that of the Italian Renaissance. A draped figure of a man stands at the side pointing to the Virgin, who has a star above her head. Authorities are divided as to this being S. Joseph, or Isaiah, and the best critics consider it to represent Isaiah alluding to his prophecy, 'Behold a Virgin shall conceive.'

There is another possible interpretation, namely that the figure is that of the prophet Balaam, and that the star alludes to Numbers xxiv. 17, 'There shall come a Star out of Jacob.'

The Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. condemned Nestorius as a heretic, for he denied the title of 'Mother of God' (Θεοτόκος) to Our Lady, and the fervour of the Catholic world found expression in the multiplication of statues and pictures of Mary and her Child. As the Cross had been the distinguishing mark of Christians during the pagan persecutions, in the fourth and the fifth centuries Mary and her Child became the outward token of Catholic Christianity. Owing probably to the fury of the Iconoclasts of later days, few of

these early examples remain, but a very early fresco in the catacombs gives a good idea of what were probably the characteristics of a vast number.

It is purely symbolical. Mary, a half-length veiled figure, holds her arms outspread in prayer, in the attitude of the numerous 'oranti'; against her breast is the half-length figure of her Son. She does not sustain or embrace Him. They are frankly symbols and theological statements.

There is an early mosaic in the façade of the portico in S. Maria in Trastevere in Rome, which is particularly interesting as representing Mary giving her breast to her Child, but from its treatment it shows the theological aspect, and was perhaps erected as an answer to the Nestorian taunt, 'How can we suppose the Logos to have been suckled?' In later times this motive is lost sight of, and such a picture has a simple domestic and human interest. I believe this is one of the earliest examples of the theological aspect, and it looks as though the old free Western spirit was not utterly crushed in Rome, but was striving ever to resist the deadening influence of the East, and seized on this most human act as a sort of protest against the inaccessibility of the Byzantine jewel-bedecked goddess who was rapidly losing all human characteristics.

In a mosaic in Capua said to be of the eighth century we get another interesting instance of the survival of the Western spirit. Mary is seated on a throne, crowned and sceptred in the Eastern manner, but the figure is alive, and the face is slightly turned on one side, and one hand embraces the little knee of the Child, who with a perfect child-like gesture raises one hand to bless while He grasps the sceptre with the other. Isaiah and Jeremiah hold scrolls with texts extolling the greatness of the Lord. SS. Peter, Paul, Stephen, and Agatha stand by the throne. It is a great and solemn exposition of the mystery of the Incarnation.

By the ninth century the idea of the beauty of the Madonna had degenerated into the ghastly conventionalism of the mosaics of S. Maria in Domnica, or della Navicella, and S. Francesca Romana in Rome, where the hard staring eyes, the high cheek-bones, the ridiculous little mouths, and the wooden lifeless figures, have become thoroughly Byzantine. The figure of Pope Pascal crouching at the feet of the Madonna in the former, and even the adoring angels at the side are diminutive, to enhance the majesty of the lifeless, staring Virgin.

This conception of Mary seated on a throne, which has come down from early times, lasted all

through the great period of Italian art. Before glancing at what may be called the more familiar conceptions of Mary and her Child, it will be well to follow out this idea of Mary enthroned.

These pictures were mainly used as altar-pieces and are, strictly speaking, visualisations of the theological statement of the human and divine nature of Christ. The throne is symbolical of His dignity, and is always supposed to be a heavenly throne, and is adorned with the carving or jewels of the taste of the period. Mary is clothed in the red tunic, symbolising love, and the blue mantle of religious faith. In all early pictures she is veiled, but in later art her long hair is frequently uncovered. The Child is vested in a tunic until the early fifteenth century; later He is usually wholly undraped.

A sixth century mosaic in the Basilica of S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, is an instance of the height to which this conception of Mary enthroned could reach in early days. She is seated on a rich throne, and sustains her Child upon her lap with one hand while she raises the other in blessing,—a rare instance of this attitude on her part—usually it is the Child only who blesses, but here both give the benediction. On each side are two great and solemn archangels.

It is extraordinarily impressive with its severe





THE VIRGIN AND CHILD ENTHRONED

*From a mosaic of the sixth century in the Church of S. Apollinare, Ravenna*



lines, and superhuman suggestiveness, and it is interesting to compare it with the best enthroned Madonnas of the great painters of the Renaissance, and see how the same idea lingered on until the gradual extinction of religion in art.

To be properly appreciated these stately pictures should be seen amid their proper surroundings above an altar, and surrounded by architecture. They are horribly incongruous displayed on a wall between a sportive Venus and a town councillor in a gold chain. They were painted to portray the Christ in His *first* humiliation as He lay a helpless infant on His mother's knee, to the eyes of the worshippers who daily adored Him in His *last* humiliation in the cup and paten on the altar beneath. At first the only company of Mary and her Child are the angels. The first human beings to be placed near them are the Saints, S. John Baptist, the Apostles, the special patrons of the particular church, and in later days the persons for whom the picture was painted ; but this description comes under the heading of votive pictures.

S. John Baptist, either as a child, or as the Forerunner, is more often introduced than any other saint. In early Greek art he is sometimes represented with wings in the character of a messenger. In later art he is often the wild

prophet of the wilderness. More commonly he is a boy bearing a reed cross, and either humbly adoring, or sporting with the Divine Child. He may be said to be the only mere human being, besides the Blessed Virgin, who in religious art of any period is properly represented as being on familiar terms with the Christ Child. There are several most exquisite pictures of him embracing the Child; in one by Luini, Mary draws both the children together, and broods over them in a rapture of love. Raphael's most charming pastorals introduce the youthful S. John, and Leonardo da Vinci's well known 'Virgin of the Rocks' shows Mary bringing the child John to Christ.

Before the thirteenth century only the angels were permitted to come close to the throne of the Mother of God. Patriarchs, Prophets, Sibyls, and Saints were either in another compartment of the picture, or below the throne. The Venetian painters kept the idea of angel ministrants into quite late art, by introducing groups of exquisite child angels who play on musical instruments and sing on the steps of the throne.

It became common during the Renaissance to omit angels altogether, and the saints approach nearer to the throne, stand on the steps of it, or peer over the shoulders of its occupants, till, I

think, the lowest depth was reached when Our Lady throws a coquettish glance into the eyes of a leering youth, while her Child is springing from her arms. I prefer not to give the name of the painter of this atrocity.

It should not be forgotten that originally the saints introduced into pictures of Mary and her Child had a religious symbolism.

The earliest saints so represented were SS. Peter and Paul, and they were the accepted type of the Church. After the early middle ages we find SS. Peter and Paul less common in art. Crivelli has a great altar-piece representing S. Peter kneeling to receive the keys of heaven and hell from the Child's hands, but it is not a common subject after the Renaissance. The Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, though they were common in thirteenth-century art, also gave place to more modern saints, or certain popular female saints, such as S. Mary Magdalen, who represents penance, and S. Catherine, who represents learning. SS. George and Christopher, as protectors from danger, were extremely popular saints, so was S. Barbara, as patroness of the contemplative life. But it would be a great task even to enumerate the more popular of the saints who clustered around Our Lady's throne, sometimes

distinguished by various attributes, such as S. Agnes' lamb, and S. Cecilia's organ.

Crivelli, Garofalo, Bonifazio, Matteo di Giovanni, Masaccio, the Vivarini, Moretto, Fra Bartolommeo, Francia, Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Bellini, Giorgione, Van Eyck, Memling, are a few of the names of the painters who have left fine and lofty conceptions of this visualisation of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

It is useless for us to conjecture who really painted the great picture ascribed to Cimabue. The legend which speaks of the rapture of the people who met it with cries and songs of joy is probably true in essence, for there seems to have sprung up almost simultaneously in various parts of Italy pictures of the Mother with the tender smile in her eyes, if not yet upon her lips, with graciousness in her mien and tender love in her gesture.

To us there seems no very great revelation in Cimabue's gentle woman with the mystically sweet face, enthroned among the angels, who invites the world's worship to the Child upon her knee, in S. Maria Novella, Florence, or in Guido da Siena's, where she points to the child so impossibly held; but when compared with other pictures then existing the difference is stupendous.



ENTHRONED MADONNA

*From the painting by Cimabue in the Church of S. Maria Novella, Florence*

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## ENTHRONED MADONNAS 37

That most emotional painter, Duccio di Buoninsegna, is one of the earliest painters to introduce a more familiar and human aspect to the idea of Mary enthroned. In his picture in the National Gallery (566), the Child, instead of blessing the world, is wholly occupied with His Mother, and draws the veil away from her face to show her to the world.

Giotto and Guido da Siena have much the same idea, but they still seat Mary on the throne and surround her with angels. ✓

As the saints approached nearer and nearer, some artists endeavoured to show the sacred character of the Mother and Child by elevating them in the clouds about the saints, and these are styled 'Madonna in Glory.' Sometimes the ancient idea of enclosing Divine persons in an aureole of light is resorted to, sometimes she is seated on the crescent moon, or as Raphael has represented her, on clouds with cherubs sporting at her feet. As a rule these pictures have less convincing spirituality about them than the old, stately enthroned Madonnas, where Mary sits enthroned, as the mystical link between humanity and the Godhead on her knee.

A very important class of pictures are those dedicated by the various religious orders, to whose influence much of the revival of art was due.

The attendants on Our Lady and her Child in these pictures are usually the saintly forerunners of the orders, SS. Augustine, Benedict, Bruno, Bernard, Dominic, Francis, Antony, and a host of other lesser-known saints. Indeed the subject of Our Lady surrounded by saints is so vast a one that it would require a volume in itself to do justice to it.

There is scarcely a great artist from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century who has not painted this idea of Mary and her Child enthroned, but not remote from the cries and needs of humanity. Among the noblest of all conceptions of Mary enthroned is that magnificent picture of Giorgione's at Castelfranco, of which Ruskin says: 'It unites every artistic quality for which the painting of Venice has been renowned, with a depth of symbolism and nobleness of manner exemplary of all that in any ages of art has characterised its highest masters. Giorgione in nowise intends you to suppose that the Madonna ever sat there on a pedestal with a coat of arms upon it; or that S. George and S. Francis ever stood, or do now stand, in that manner beside her, but that a living Venetian may, in such vision, most deeply and rightly so conceive of her and them.'



ENTHRONED MADONNA WITH SAINTS

*From the painting by Giovanni Bellini in the Academy, Venice*



## CHAPTER IV

### THE VIRGIN AND CHILD IN THE MIDDLE AGES

**T**HE tendency of the mind of the middle ages is abundantly illustrated by numerous little pictures to which a halo of sanctity is attached, which vary in date from a possible eighth century to the twelfth and thirteenth.

They are of smaller size than the mosaics and enthroned Virgins, and are adapted for use in private chapels and houses. They show Mary under another aspect. She is not painted as the mysterious link between God and man, nor as the beloved and powerful Intercessor, nor as the dispenser of Mercy, but as the one human being who best loved the greatest miracle of Love, her Child. She is wholly occupied by Him, she adores Him, she caresses Him, she holds Him as only His Mother could, she exhibits Him to the world's worship, but the world is nothing to her, she is wholly wrapt in Him.

The very limitations of the artist help to exhibit the naïve and artless worship of his heart. The sweet simplicity of some of these half-barbaric little pictures raises an extraordinarily tender emotion, like a child's artless play at 'being grown up.' It is impossible to fix a date to most of them. They are roughly grouped together as products of medieval times, and popular superstition attributes many of the worst of them to S. Luke. Some of them were possibly painted by a Byzantine artist of that name who lived in the ninth century or thereabouts.

The best Italian specimens, such as that in S. Maria in Cosmedin in Rome, though dark in colour, are tender and refined, altogether Italian in feeling and probably wholly Italian in origin. Another equally beautiful is in Perugia. The Child stands on His Mother's knee and draws her face to His lips with His little hand under her chin. It is in such idyllic and tender pictures as these that we can trace the Italian spirit struggling under the load of Byzantine harshness and formality. In Venice, where the Eastern influence was greatest, we see the harsh severe scowling Byzantine Madonnas, contemporary with these sweet and human Mothers. In S. Mark's we have the severe, stiff goddess

type down to the thirteenth century. In the Duomo of Torcello is one of the most satisfactory of these dignified and lofty conceptions of the twelfth century which by its simple grandeur atones for its conventionality.

It is possible that the preaching of S. Francis, who had a passionate devotion to the sacred Infancy, helped to multiply the demand for pictures of Mary as the tender human mother among ordinary human surroundings. Although enthroned Madonnas continued to be painted as altar-pieces a vast number of smaller devotional pictures were painted of Mary amid scenes of earth, which become endowed with a mystical meaning.

Thus the blossoming rose-hedge is the mystic enclosure of the 'garden enclosed' which surrounds the Beloved. Fruits, flowers, and birds, symbolised the Divine graces and virtues of the most highly endowed human being. The rocky landscape represented the ruined world her Child redeemed. By devout artists the ordinary surroundings of our daily life were pressed into the service of God, so that a mystical poem is woven out of the commonest necessities of mankind.

Between these tender, serious, devout pictures of the Divine Mother presenting her Divine

Child to the world, and the naughty boy fighting his coquettish mother of Correggio, or the coarse stolid peasant woman of Dutch, and modern art, lies a vast space filled with such an enormous number of conceptions of all shades of merit, that it is only possible to enumerate a few examples. With the exception of the later Dutch and English schools there has scarcely been a great artist from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, who has not left some record of his ideas of this Mother and this Child.

Space prevents any description of the wonderful vitality and life of the important and numerous sculptors of this period, such as Pisano, della Robbia, Pellegrini, Donatello, etc., who invested the stones and clay of earth with such marvellous life that Mary and her Son seem to spring afresh from the earth that is the Mother of all.

That superabundant vitality of Northern Italy and Northern France, which made the stones to speak, was somewhat slower of development in the art of painting, yet in one of its most conservative artists, the blessed Angelico, we see this exquisite living tenderness in his picture of the Divine Child nestling His face under His Mother's, while His little hand caresses her chin (Monastery of S. Mark, Florence).

The multiplicity of pictures on this one theme



is so distracting that it is a work of too great magnitude even to classify them in a small space. The Mother and Child are as common in art as in nature, and they vary almost as much.

Primarily it had been a theological statement. Mary was the semi-divine link between God and man. In this light was she viewed by such artists as Duccio, Angelico, Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, Perugino, Bellini, Luini, and numerous others. The history of the effigies of Mary and her Child reveal, as few subjects can, the real ideas of the ages in which they occur.

Angelico painted the ideal saintly, pure woman of a holy monk's visions. Filippino Lippi and Botticelli, the ethereal spiritualised creature set amid the unsatisfied yearnings of a lower physical nature. Bellini and Luini, the lofty intellectual woman, whose soul had received the impress of the Divine spirit; Perugino, the lovely lady of chivalry; Leonardo da Vinci, the correct beauty of faultless feature; Raphael, once the vision of the supreme Mother in heaven, but more frequently an insipid woman of languid physique and cold heart; Correggio, the sportive, romping girl, exultant in her young motherhood; Giorgione, the lady of chivalrous dreams; the Dutch painters, the middle-class housewife and fond

mother, who is often oblivious and uncomprehending of the Divine nature of her Son.

If the object of religious art is to excite religious emotion, the passionate quietude of the Sienese painters most amply fulfils that requirement, and it is in their painting of Mary and her Child that their peculiar qualities of exquisite delicacy of feeling and wrapt devotion have found their fullest expression.

Mary is usually crowned with the palest golden hair, her eyes are of hazel brown with the lower lid uplifted in ecstasy, her head bent over her Child in rapture of dreamy adoration. The excessive grace of the lines of her undulating figure recalls the wonderful curves of rolling waves, the faint colours glowing in their purity like gems.

One of the most exquisitely graceful of all Madonnas is that jewelled poem of Mary holding her Child, by Naddo Ceccharelli, belonging to Sir F. Cook. The lines of the lovely hands suggest the rhythm of poetry; the colours are tenderest rose and dim green, and soft old gold; the patterned gold of Mary's under-vesture and the Child's little shirt revealing that inner clothing of wrought gold enclosing the pure in heart.

In Francesco di Giorgio Martini we have the attitude of Mary bending over her Child used with



MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS

*From the painting by Pietro di Domenico in the possession of the Earl  
of Crawford, K. T.*



so much more popularity by Correggio. The marvellous Infant blessing from His Mother's arms in Matteo da Siena's picture, where she holds His hand up while she worships Him, is a prayer in itself. All the charm and grace of Correggio we find in the Sieneese artists, but without his trivialities and affectations.

The two Florentine artists who equal this passionate rapture of the Sieneese are those most poetic painters, Botticelli and Filippino Lippi.

But with Botticelli there is a strain of earthly passion which intrudes like a serpent into the Paradise of beauty which he threw upon his panels. The misery of humanity is so passionately felt, its inevitable suffering and decay have so filled the soul of the Virgin Mother, that the very presence of the Child who *is* the life of the world seems unspeakable anguish to her. The sinless angels who adore are pallid with tears, as if they too had need of redemption by suffering. So dark and terrible is the shadow thrown by the flesh that Mary in heaven writing 'Magnificat' is in rapture that is pain. The same wild intensity of emotion is present in Filippino Lippi's pictures of Our Lady, but with him the spirit overpowers the flesh, and shines through it as moonbeams through the darkness.

An admirable instance of his most poetic con-

ception hangs on the walls of our National Gallery (No. 293), and is generally quite unregarded by the majority of the visitors.

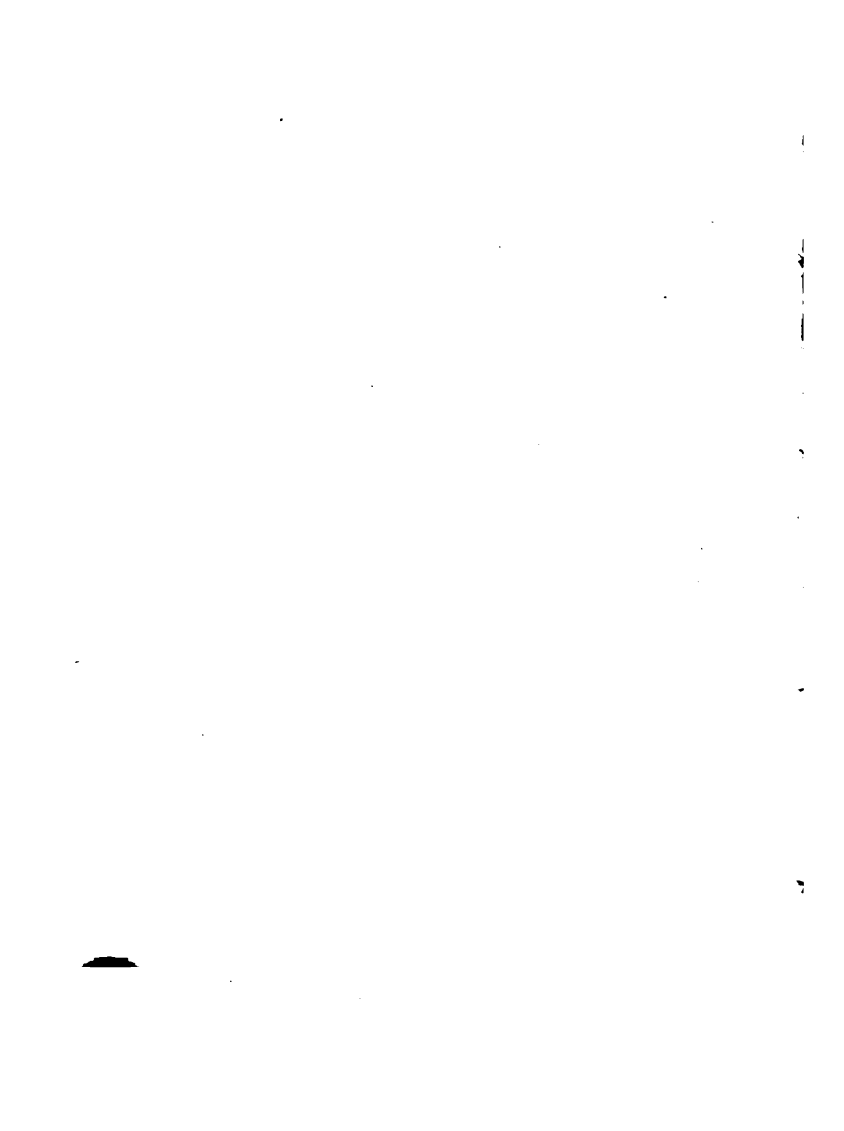
Mary is seated amid a wild and rocky landscape in the gloom of the suffering and toil of sinful humanity. Peasants labour, and wild beasts haunt the shades. S. Jerome and S. Dominic, representing the contemplative and the active life of the Church, kneel on each side of her.

She is absolutely unconscious of her environment. The wild birds and beasts, the work-a-day world, the adoring saints, are but the things of time. The Eternal Son has so enclosed her in the mystery of the immutable and Eternal God-head, that no creation, even of His, can distract her from the 'wonder upon her knee.' Her pure, pale, and passionate face is the nearest approach to the Divinity enshrouded in womanhood and motherhood (that channel by which the very Redemption of the world was wrought) that has ever been materialised in art, according to my judgment. It is absolutely untainted by the flesh, indeed the flesh is so etherealised as to be but the veil for the spirit. Botticelli's Madonnas, ethereally lovely as they are, are grievously imprisoned by their fleshly envelope. Filippino Lippi's Madonna is as unconscious of the burden of the flesh as her Son when He walked upon



MADONNA AND CHILD

*From the painting by Botticelli in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence*





the waters. Yet the terrible mystery of this humanity of ours is emphasised in its most intense form, for her Child is drawing His human life from her breast. I know of no painting of Divine persons so in accordance with the highest spirituality as this.

His enthroned Madonna in the Uffizi has the same lovely spiritual face. She tenderly embraces her Child with one hand, while the other is raised half in adoration, half in a purely maternal gesture of care over Him. She is 'full of grace,' spiritual and physical; angels and saints are around her. In the Prado picture she has risen from her throne, and comes towards the faithful, bearing Him in her arms; her feet tread the earth, but above her meek bowed head are the heavens opened, and cherubim circle around her.

One of the most exquisite of all devotional pictures of Mary and her Child is by the same artist. Mary kneels in the midst of the mystical garden of grace, surrounded by roses, while angels scatter rose-leaves over the Infant she adores.

Filippino Lippi's Madonnas are too ethereal, too spiritual, too sad and mysterious to be widely popular in England; they are neither sentimental, nor fleshly, nor robustly human.

In the thoughtful, serious work of Carlo Crivelli, the early devotional treatment of the Mother and

Child is everywhere apparent. I do not think that there exists a careless or flippant picture of his. His carefully wrought and elaborate accessories give an added seriousness to his stately seated Madonnas, for the very flowers are not used as mere adornments to beautiful women, but are the tributes of earth to its Creator, a solemn expression of homage. His lavish use of gold and jewels and rich drapery is for the same serious reason, and his Madonnas have the same serene sad contemplativeness as those of the earlier generation of artists.

In the National Gallery we have two of the most interesting and beautiful of his works; 788, a great altar-piece in three stages, is occupied by grand figures of solemn saints, who surround the Virgin. She is seated with the Infant Christ asleep in her lap. His little head rests on her hand, and he clings to one of her fingers.

His other great picture of Mary enthroned (807) is one which represents Mary as really beautiful, and not merely as the conventional, placid, faultless queen.

The same seriousness of purpose is seen in Giovanni Bellini's Madonnas. Technically his work is in advance of Crivelli's, but nothing was further from Bellini's thoughts than to use sacred personages as a medium by which to exhibit his

own powers. A restrained and noble pathos is the dominant feeling expressed in his Madonnas. She is no trivial, light-minded young mother, but a woman conscious of the awful destiny of the Mother of God. His pictures are devout contemplations into which no unholy or trivial thought intrudes ; a deep and intellectual piety is revealed in all its stately simplicity in this good man's works. There are three in our National Gallery, and any one who wishes to understand what devout contemplation means should study Mary praying the prayer of adoration over her Child (No. 599).

Francia in his pictures of Our Lady usually represents her seated on a high throne with devout saints at the side, and with delightful little girl angels, who play on a variety of musical instruments at her feet. He is happiest in these solemn compositions, which are pious, beautiful, reverent and graceful.

The most intellectual conception of the Madonna is Luini's. In many of the great artists' pictures she is devout, benign, mysterious, gracious, and beautiful, but she is not always clever, Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, and Bellini all represent her as highly intellectual, but Luini in his pictures gives her the noble brow and fine intelligence of a remarkable mind. In one picture in

the Layard Gallery in Venice, she has been reading in the Book of Wisdom, and she gazes deep into the eyes of her Child for its interpretation. He answers the look as He places His arm about her neck to comfort her in the present for the agony she will suffer in His agony in the future.

Luini always makes her beautiful, with purity and love radiating from her sweet face; in this picture he touches a depth not often reached. In one of his many pictures of this subject she draws the Divine Child and S. John together within the folds of her mantle, and broods over them in a rapture of maternity. The divine and spiritual piercing insight of Mary's Motherhood seems to have impressed Luini more than any other consideration.

The characteristic of Perugino's Madonnas is their power of lifting the spectator with her into the lofty realms of grace. She dwells on high in the peace that passeth all understanding, and the mere sight of her outward bearing wafts us into the heavenly country. As a glimpse of sunlit mountain, which with eternal snows pierces in the distance through the mists and fogs of earth, and lifts our heart, toiling amid the depth, into a rapture of delight, so Mary kneeling beside her Son is so full of grace that the mere sight of her

raises our soul above our grovelling and sordid thoughts.

To go out of the noise and stress and dirty air of the London streets into the National Gallery, and look at Mary adoring her Child, is like a breath of the finest mountain air, and lifts and enlarges heart and mind. Quite peculiar to Perugino is this extraordinary sense of illimitable sunlit air mystically representing the very love of God itself in its width, its depth, its height.

His Madonnas are pensive, but not sad, with faultless regularity of feature, with fair soft hair, and absolute grace of mien. They suffer somewhat from Raphael's having adopted the same type and made it impassively trivial, but in Perugino's hands the faultless face is neither simpering nor vacant.

Raphael is, in most people's estimation, *par excellence* the painter of the Mother and Child. I use this term advisedly, for, of so many of his pictures of exquisitely beautiful and graceful women and children which are called 'Holy Families,' a very large percentage are simply studies of youthful models, and might be any mother, and any child. Once he does see the Divine Mother, who stands between heaven and earth, the door by which our humanity entered heaven. The San Sisto Madonna must

not be judged by the feeble, worthless copies which cheap artistic processes have caricatured. As Raphael painted her, she is the apotheosis of womanhood in her Divine aspect of maternity, and is far removed from the simpering prettiness of his pastoral Madonnas, or his calm peasant women. The flat, smooth faces with the simpering foolish little mouths, characterless noses, and placid eyes, are all very pretty and graceful. They no more represent the heroic girl, or the calm endurance of the Mother of Sorrows, than do the other extremes, the harsh dull Byzantine masks.

The Madonna di Ansdei is not one of his typical Madonnas, for it was copied in idea and spirit from earlier models, neither is the Madonna del Gran Duca, for it has a touch of the majestic wistfulness of his master Perugino; it is his pastoral pictures, where Mary, seated on flowery grass, plays with her Child, or is calmly quiescent while He amuses Himself with S. John, which are the typical Raphaellesque Madonnas. When he paints the Madonna La Belle Jardinière, he forgets the Bride of the Holy Ghost in the charming young Mother.

Sodoma's pictures of Our Lady, with one exception, are exceedingly uninteresting. That exception is a charming little panel in the Brera Gallery in Milan. There the face of Our Lady is



MADONNA AND CHILD WITH S. JOHN

*From the painting by Raphael in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg*





full of beauty and feeling, and might almost have been painted by Leonardo da Vinci. It is very Lombard in character, and exceedingly delicate and beautiful.

One of the sweetest pictures of the Child Christ caressing His Mother is by Francesco Morone, (285) in the National Gallery, where both Mother and Child are exceedingly sweet and tender.

Lorenzo di Credi is one of the painters who excelled in this representation of *La Madre Pia*, where Mary adores the Godhead of her Son. Very numerous and beautiful are his pictures of this subject, notably one in the Uffizi where Mary and an angel both bend over the Child in rapturous adoration.

The healthy, pretty, dark-eyed peasant women of Andrea del Sarto have little of the spiritual about them, as the robust romping boys they carry have none of the divinity of the Child-God. There is a lovely picture of his in the Uffizi, where the Child's expression is very arch and winning, as He clings round His Mother's neck, but there is an air of calm aloofness about her which gives an impression that her own charms are of more consequence to her than her Child's caresses.

In his picture in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg,

he has emphasised a peculiarity of his, in the likeness between Mother and Child, very strongly. Unfortunately one knows that the features of Our Lady were too often merely those of his own infamous wife.

Murillo's Madonnas are all of the same type, with dark glowing eyes, full face, curved lips and misty dark hair. They are full of passion and ardour, vigorous as healthy peasant folk are, but though they are overflowing with human life they reach the highest point of womanly spirituality in that worshipping Mother in the National Gallery (13), where Mary's whole soul is so fixed on her Child that she dwells in the heaven where He is.

In another fine picture of his the Child stands on Mary's lap and looks with prophetic insight on the little Cross S. John holds, as Elizabeth kneels and presents her great son to the only Son of Man who is greater. Less spiritual and more commonplace is Murillo's picture in the Corsini Gallery in Rome, where Mother and Child are magnificently spirited studies of peasant life. Murillo was more successful as the delineator of the spotless girl than as the Mother of the Child Christ.

The old German masters allowed their love of flowers full scope in their tender little pictures of Mary and her Child. Master Stephen's lovely

little picture of 'Mary a tender flower amongst the Flowers' at Cologne, is a beautiful example. She sits amid the flowers on a green bank with her Child clinging about her neck, a thick rose hedge full of little birds screens her from the world.

Schongauer's Madonna of the Rose Hedge, S. Martin's, Colmar, is another example. The roses form a screen and birds flit about among them. The face is scarcely beautiful, but the expression is, and the Child clinging to her neck is better drawn than the majority of German infants, and His attitude is wholly natural and lifelike.

The same love of flowers is expressed in John van Eyck's picture in the Berlin Museum, of Our Lady walking in a garden enclosed by a rose hedge, having a fountain within it. The Child is wretchedly drawn, but her face and expression as she clasps Him, are good.

We have a very charming instance of the German fifteenth-century spirit, in No. 1085, in the National Gallery. Mary is seated in a garden with wonderful architecture in the background, a fountain and trees. She is reading a book. At her feet, on a cushion, is the Child Christ. Angels and attendants are amusing Him with toys, fruit, and music. He is quite the normal human baby, and but for the angels' wings and Mary's studious

air, and the two S. Johns, who kneel at the side, it would have only a purely human interest.

Comparatively few people have seen the Madonna and Child of Lucas Cranach the elder, one of the most beautiful of the German Madonnas. Our Lady is almost covered with her magnificent rippling hair which flows over her shoulders far below her waist. It is a half length figure, very youthful and sweet, holding the Child in her arms. He lifts an apple to her face, and behind them is a marvellous mountain landscape with pine forests, and castle-crowned crags; a much more beautiful picture than the generality of German pictures, and with the usual wonderful drapery.

Memling, that devout and religious painter, so refined and delicate in his ideas, that even the coarse Fleming becomes spiritual and noble under his hands, might be called the Fra Angelico of the North. His pictures of Our Lady even when they have not the faultless loveliness of feature we admire in the Italian painters, are so full of delicacy, of majesty, of tenderness, and intellect, that they often give the impression of greater beauty than the more faultless faces.

At Chatsworth, in the centre of a triptych, is Mary enthroned, studying the Book of Wisdom. One angel plays on an organ and another plays

with the Divine Child on her lap. The donors of the work kneel in front, and at the back is one of those wonderfully painted landscapes that the Flemings loved as much as the Umbrians. With various modifications, Memling repeats this theme in several of his altar-pieces. Mary is always sweet, devout, and serious ; angels sing and play, and saints and donors kneel.

## CHAPTER V

### THE VIRGIN AND CHILD—DOMESTIC GROUPS AND MODERN ART

ABOUT the middle of the fifteenth century it became the fashion to paint purely domestic groups of Our Lady and her Child attended by S. Joseph, S. Elizabeth and her son, and occasionally attendants. The most numerous of these groups in which the interest is more domestic or historical than devotional, represent S. John as a child playing with or amusing the Child Christ. Less common are groups in which S. Anna, the mother of Our Lady, is introduced. Leonardo da Vinci's well known cartoon, in which the Virgin is seated on S. Anna's knees, is to my thinking fantastic and trivial. There is a far more dignified and worthy conception of the same subject in the National Gallery (748) by Girolamo dai Libri.

Perugino has painted a large family group of



MADONNA AND CHILD WITH S. ELIZABETH AND S. JOHN  
*From the painting by Andrea del Sarto in the Louvre, Paris*





Mary holding her Child, with S. Anna resting her hands on her shoulders; a group of boys and women represent the cousins and relations of Our Lady. Parmigiano painted a similar picture, but the subject was not a popular one.

The small Holy Families in which S. Joseph appears, as in one of Raphael's, where he looks over Mary's shoulder as she coquettishly removes a veil from her Child, are much more frequent, and the contrast of the aged face and the blooming young mother and infant, appealed to a number of artists.

But most popular were pictures in which the infant Baptist was introduced, either as a child playing with the Child Christ, as in Raphael's picture (744) in the National Gallery, or more satisfactorily where the child John looks with adoring wonder on Him whom he proclaimed to be the Lamb of God, as in several of Botticelli's, and the well-known 'Virgin of the Rocks,' by Leonardo da Vinci (1093), National Gallery, or more beautifully still in Luini's *Madonna dell' Agnello* at Lugano, where the faces of the children and Mary are almost divinely beautiful. Mary stands between the children with her hands on their shoulders; they and she are enchanting in their holy innocence.

Among the purely mystical and devotional

representations of Our Lady is that curious subject known as the marriage of S. Catherine. It was an extremely popular subject while people remembered that it symbolised the spiritual union of Christ with the soul. I do not think that there is a single modern instance of this subject in art. It occurred in early Greek art, and was immensely popular from the middle of the fifteenth century. Usually Our Lady is seated and holds her Child on her lap, who places a ring on the finger of S. Catherine, who stands or kneels before Him. Titian, Perugino, Correggio, Parmigiano, Borgognone, Memling, all have left fine pictures of this devotional subject. Sometimes it is that ecstatic and most mystical minded nun S. Catherine of Siena, who is represented as the spiritual spouse of the Divine, as in the great picture by Fra Bartolommeo in Florence. There is a beautiful Memling in S. John's Hospital at Bruges, full of magnificent colour, where Our Lady reads from a book and angels play, while the mystic marriage takes place.

There is also a fine picture by Gheeraert David (1432) in the National Gallery, glowing with that rich deep colour of the great Flemish masters, very quiet and restrained in sentiment. There is a Venetian representation of the same scene in the Gallery (1409).

A variant of this theme introduced by later painters represents S. Catherine with the action of a good-natured nursemaid, embracing the Child Christ. The well-known Titian in the National Gallery is a good instance of this degradation of a religious subject, which, but for the fat infant in the sky, has no religious significance at all.

As soon as the meaning of a picture ceased to interest any one, its surface qualities were all that mattered. In Mary and her Child we see this downward tendency more notably in Correggio than any other artist, for he of all men could do with paint what he would. His luminosity, his powers of foreshortening, perspective, grace and vitality, are unrivalled, and his pictures are expositions of what paint can achieve. They are lovely and graceful and sensuous. One of his most characteristic is in the National Gallery (23). The vapid, trivial young mother is struggling to dress a fractious and rebellious child. What could have been the painter's conception of the Lord of Glory when he represents Him as a naughty child!

It is not in any partisan spirit that I point out the undeniable fact that with the Reformation the conception of the 'Blessed among women' and the Saviour of the world becomes light-

minded, paltry, silly, and sentimental. We have an admirable instance of this in Barocci's picture, in the National Gallery (No. 29), where the infant S. John is holding a wretched goldfinch up to a cat to *amuse* the Child Christ! His trivial, empty-headed mother looks smilingly on at the creature's agony, and S. Joseph is equally delighted.

✓ Even with greater artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Mary is no longer the artist's ideal of pure womanhood, for he paints the Child Christ on the knees of his own mistress. Indeed from this time onwards a very fair gallery of the wantons of the age could be brought together from the so-called 'Holy Families,' and 'Madonnas' of the great artists.

Of the numerous modern pictures painted of Our Lady and her Child, very few call for remark, by reason sometimes of their being obvious copies of the ideas of former ages, and more frequently by the weakness and feebleness of their conception. By far the most notable that it has been my fortune to see is on the walls of the Neue Pinakothek at Munich, by P. A. J. Dagnan-Bouveret.

It is not a beautiful picture; neither modern civilisation nor religion possessing that attribute, it would be unreasonable to ask for it in a

modern religious picture, but it has to quite a remarkable extent the pathetic wistfulness which takes the place of piety nowadays with the majority of religious people.

Mary, a homely-featured peasant woman, is seated on a bench in the carpenter's shop. She is wrapt in meditation, sad, yearning, wondering. Beneath her mantle she holds her Child to her breast, but the rays of His glory pierce through the coarse serge and illumine her, while her hands caress His body. It is startling in its intensity, and is itself a prayer of meditation. I can recall no other instance in modern art which recalls the wrapt mysticism of the Sienese and Fra Angelico, but it is modern down to every detail, and is the one really religious picture of this subject that I have seen in recent art.

The sentimental prettiness of most modern pictures of Our Lady need scarcely be enumerated. The German school is horribly prolific in them, and so is the French. They riot from the extremes of common ugly peasant women brutally rendered, to the sickly sentimentalities of fashion-plate young ladies.

There are happily exceptions. J. Janssen's picture of Mary on Good Friday night, reaching out her hands to S. Veronica, who exhibits to her the sacred cloth on which the face of Christ

is depicted, has a noble sentiment in it which is beautifully and simply expressed.

Nobility and dignity too, are not wanting in the agonised woman waiting by the rock tomb, while the body of Christ is being borne past the stupendous walls of Jerusalem to be laid for the last time in her arms, by Bruno Piglhein, in the Neue Pinakothek, Munich.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PIETÀ—MATER DOLOROSA—THE LAST JUDGMENT

**W**E now come to the consideration of one of the most popular subjects in art. Roughly classified as 'The Pietà,' it is found painted or sculptured in nearly every Catholic church in the world. From the point of view of art, the modern examples are often repulsive in their realism; but from the point of view of humanity, they appear to convey a deeper religious significance than almost any other, for they are scarcely ever without a sorrowful man or woman drawing strength and comfort from the contemplation of the greatest sorrow the world has seen.

They are none of them of very early origin. As the world rolls on it seems to need more consolation for sorrow than it did in earlier days. Possibly civilisation has made the capacity for suffering greater, and heaven more remote. Whatever the cause, we certainly find no early instance

of Christians yearning for this sympathy in suffering. To judge by its popular art, the Christian world, since the days of persecution, thinks more of its sorrows and less of heaven. Artists supply what people demand; Christ dead and His mother sorrowing came in with modern times; and Christ in Glory is chiefly found in the old mosaics of early days.

There are two aspects of this subject, the historical—in which Our Lady, the faithful women, S. John, and Nicodemus, on receiving the Body of Christ at the foot of the cross, take a last tender farewell of the Beloved before wrapping Him in the grave clothes to bear Him to the tomb—and the mystical. The former will be treated in the chapter on the Crucifixion in the series of the Life of Our Lady.

The Threnodia, or Mary's Lament, was a drama represented in Constantinople as early as the fourth century, having for its theme the ever-recurring anguish of maternal love and sorrow. It is possible that originally this was one of the sacred dramas instituted by S. Gregory Nazianzen in the hope of banishing profane plays by supplying sacred themes for dramatic representation. A version of this play is preserved in a Book of the Gospels in the Convent of Vatopedi. It is possibly owing to this drama that we get the idea of that widely







PIETÀ

*From the painting by Francia in the National Gallery*

popular class of representations known as the Pietà, which, properly speaking, is a wholly mystical subject, for it is a representation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Christ is shown as the completed sacrifice, dead in the arms of the woman who gave Him to the world. Mary is here not as the personification of the Church (as when she stands beneath the cross and is Christ's last legacy to the world), but she is the mother of the Redeemer. She presents the completed Sacrifice to that world to whom she first showed Him as a Babe.

In Francia's beautiful picture (180) in our National Gallery her eyes ask us as we go by—  
'What more could My Beloved have done for you than He has done? Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?'

Another most pathetic and beautiful of the many beautiful pictures of this subject is by Luini, where Christ's thorn-crowned Head sinks back on His mother's brow as she tenderly upholds Him.

Sometimes S. John and Mary Magdalen are introduced into these mystical pictures, and they may be held to represent the two classes into which the human race may roughly be divided, the just and the unjust, the saint and the sinner.

Fra Angelico painted this subject in a still more

mystical manner, for he represents the half-length figure of Christ behind a tomb, with the instruments of the Passion around Him, while Mary and John sit in devout contemplation on each side. This aspect of Christ as the perpetual sacrifice of the Eucharist was also a favourite one with the Bellini. Gian Bellini has a picture in Venice in which Mary presses her face to Christ's face as she upholds Him above the tomb, while S. John supports His arm. And there is another by him, now in the Uffizi, which is one of those rare pictures of the Passion in which Christ is majestically and tenderly beautiful. Mary holds Him in her arms as she gazes into His face. It is full of supreme anguish nobly endured. Very different is Vandyck's treatment, where the mean and ignoble Christ droops feebly over the knees of His mother, who is looking away from Him.

Crivelli painted two very remarkable Pietàs, in which the expression of grief on the mother's face as she embraces her Son is extremely pathetic. Unfortunately the same emotion on S. John's and the Magdalen's face is so much overdrawn that they really verge on the ludicrous. The background of the one in the Vatican is entirely composed of cherubs' heads, which gives the rich detailed effect that Crivelli produced in



EUCHARISTIC ECCE HOMO

*From the painting by Giovanni Bellini in the Ducal Palace, Venice*

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most of his pictures by the introduction of fruits, flowers, and rich brocades.

The picture called 'The Entombment' by Botticelli, Old Pinakothek, Munich, is really a Pietà. The dead Christ lying back over His mother's knees, with the closed eyes, has the beauty of a Greek god. His mother sinks back overcome as her arm falls helplessly over Him. Its wild intensity of emotion recalls Duccio's frantically wailing women.

Fra Bartolommeo's 'Pietà' in the Pitti Palace, Florence, is chiefly remarkable for the fine pose of the dead Christ. His mother tenderly draws His head to her lips, while one hand falls limply over her arms. S. John supports the shoulders, while Mary Magdalen embraces His feet. The face of the mother, swollen with tears, suggests complete grief.

Among the most remarkable instances of this subject is the great group by Michael Angelo in a chapel in the Vatican, which for sublime resignation is unapproachable. A critic is said to have objected that Mary was too young, and the great sculptor's answer is said to have been, 'Purity enjoys eternal youth.'

The aspect of Mary as the Mater Dolorosa is a purely devotional subject, and often treated in the worst possible taste. It is not uncommon

to represent crudely her spiritual agony by the literal representation of a sword struck in her heart, in allusion to Simeon's prophecy. Such coarse realism is only resorted to by inferior artists, and in the works of all the great masters the Mater Dolorosa is a noble and mournful figure full of sublime sorrow and pathos.

The intense Spaniards painted some of the most poignant of these pictures. There is one by Murillo in which her eyes are lifted in unutterable anguish, and the tears are streaming down the face.

As a rule, her hands are clasped and her head shaded by a veil. Sometimes she is sitting at the foot of the cross. Properly speaking, these sad figures should be of a woman of middle age, and with the exception of Michael Angelo, she is so, in the hands of the best artists. Guido Reni, and later artists, made her a sentimental, pretty young maiden.

Frequently they are only half-length figures, but a vast number of these popular pictures consist of the head only. There is a fine example in the National Gallery by Quintin Matsys, which is a pendant to his 'Salvator Mundi' (295), where Mary, with the tears streaming down her face, is extremely pathetic and dignified, and the likeness to her Son in feature is beautifully indicated.



## THE LAST JUDGMENT 71

The Carracci and the Spanish school excelled in these delineations of Mary mourning. Unfortunately as artists ceased to take any real interest in the personality of Mary they had to emphasise her sufferings by the crude introduction of seven swords, planted in her bosom, which give to even the most devout of these pictures a distinctly comic air. Vandyck used these material weapons to emphasise his Virgin's grief. Far more effective is this allusion to her seven sorrows when the swords are spiritual swords and encircle her in the air, mingled with the radiance of glory.

There is another aspect of Mary, which is of frequent occurrence in medieval art, and that is as an Intercessor at the Last Judgment.

Christ's Second Coming was apparently more ardently looked for in the early and middle ages of Christianity than it is now, judging from the frequent occurrence of pictures and sculptures representing it. It would be considered bad taste now to allude so prominently to a subject distasteful to so many, as to blazon it on the wall of a church,<sup>1</sup> but all through the middle ages, while on the east end of the church were depicted the suffering Christ, the risen Christ, and the

<sup>1</sup> In an Illustrated Gospels recently published containing 300 illustrations there is not one of the Last Judgment. Yet the subject is alluded to in the Gospels.

Child Christ ; on the west wall was frequently the awful story of the Doom.

At Torcello there is a fresco a good deal restored, which is a fair example of what was a very usual adornment of a west wall ; traces of similar frescoes exist on numerous west ends of English churches.

Many of the more serious artists of the early Renaissance painted this terrible subject : Orcagna, Giotto, Fra Angelico, Signorelli, and later Fra Bartolommeo, Michael Angelo, Tintoretto and Raphael.

Orcagna's, in the Campo Santo in Pisa, is perhaps the best known. In all these pictures Mary appears beside her Son as the great Intercessor. It is the present fashion to accuse these painters of exalting Mary's compassion for sinners as greater than her Son's, a blasphemy these serious artists would have been the first to reject ; but whenever civilisation has softened minds and bodies, the Justice of God and punishment for sin are unpopular truths. Dean Farrar is very severe with Orcagna for representing the position of sinners at the Last Day as being 'too late' for mercy. In medieval times the gospel conception of Christ as Judge as well as Redeemer was not so frequently lost sight of, and Mary, whose mission is never that of Judge, was quite rightly



OUR LADY AS INTERCESSOR

*From Orcagna's "Last Judgment" in the Campo Santo, Pisa*



represented as that most tender and forgiving creature, an interceding, all-pitying Mother.

The tenderest conception of Christ which exists in the world is written in stone on the monkish cathedrals of Rheims and Amiens designed by Cistercian monks. There Christ is pre-eminently the *Brother* of Men. In the great Doom, over one of the porches in Rheims, the benign figure of Christ is holding the souls of the redeemed in His lap. Mary is on her knees beside Him praying in an agony of supplication. At Amiens she also kneels beside her Son in company with S. John Baptist. In pictures she is more often represented as seated beside her Son with hands folded on her breast and her eyes fixed on Him.

In Orcagna's great fresco she is seated in an aureole of glory beside Christ, and Signorelli gives very much the same treatment. In both pictures she lays her hand upon her breast and meekly prays, but in Orcagna's picture she is gazing at Christ, and in Signorelli's she is looking with deepest pity down at the miserable ones for whom she is pleading.

In Michael Angelo's horrible blasphemy, called The Last Judgment, Mary shrinks in an affected pose beneath the menacing arm of her gladiator Son who is hurling the lost to their doom. She is not praying, but gazing with ladylike fascinated

curiosity at the writhing victims. She is horrified but consciously graceful. Anything further removed from the primitive conception of the great Intercessor and Mother of Mercy cannot be conceived. It is the pagan conception of the weak sheltering under the strong, and without love or pity for the unfortunate.

## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY LIFE

**I**N the early ages of Christianity there was a wide-spread belief in certain books which have been excluded from the Canon of Scripture. The stories contained in them continued to be represented in art, and it is probable that the main tendency of some of these legends was founded on a sub-stratum of fact.

They chiefly relate to the parentage of the Virgin Mary, and to domestic incidents of the life of Our Lord as a Child. When the Churches were the lesson books of the people it was exceedingly common to have in them lives of Christ either painted on the walls, or carved in wood or stone, and this series nearly always began with the life of His mother, preceded by incidents in the life of her parents.

The names of Our Lady's parents were Joachim and Anne, worthy and pious people, who gave

great alms, but whose lives were rendered bitter by childlessness. For twenty years they hoped and prayed for a child, and vowed that if the Lord would send them one they would dedicate it to God. So great was the disdain in which they were held because of childlessness that the high priest at last rejected Joachim's offering, and the stricken man fled into the wilderness to grieve. Anne, mourning in her home, envied the very sparrows and the fishes in the sea. To both the mourners came an angel from the Lord, announcing that their prayers and alms were before God, and a child should be born to them. Anne, full of faith, rose to meet her husband, who, coming in from the wilderness, radiant from his vision, met her at the Golden Gate of the city, and they fell into each others' arms and mingled their praises of God.

This pathetic little story is usually represented in four scenes — Joachim rejected from the Temple; the appearance of the angel to him; Anne praying while her maid mocks her; and the meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate. Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, and their followers, and numerous other Italian artists, treat these scenes with great simplicity and dignity. Joachim is a tragic and noble figure in Giotto's frescoes, and his meeting with Anne is full of the deepest



tenderness and nobility. Hans Memling in his more tragic manner is also dignified and simple. Albert Dürer not only makes the story domestic, but inclined to vulgarity, and the stately embrace of two noble beings degenerates into a rough hug, while gossips laugh at the spectacle.

The festival of the birth of the Virgin has a pretty legend attached to it.

In the seventh century a certain monk, who had closed his heart to the pleasures of the world to open it to God, heard a sound of wondrous singing as he prayed in his cell one night. He listened devoutly, but the sounds were not repeated until the following year on that same autumn night. Every year this celestial harmony was heard by him, and, in answer to his humble request as to the cause of this melody, he was told that they were keeping festival in heaven on the birthday of the woman who had borne the Saviour of mankind. Pope Sergius (687-701), to whom he told his revelation, wishing to join the angels in their rejoicing, instituted the festival of the Nativity of Our Lady on the day the singing had been heard, the eighth of September.

The Nativity of Our Lady occurs not only in the series of her life, but was frequently painted separately. It has varied very little in treatment.

Anne lies on a couch while attendants bathe, or clothe, the infant in the foreground. Giotto has a slight variant, for he makes Anne sit up in bed with her arms outstretched to receive the tightly swathed infant from the attendant. There are few things in early art more expressive and beautiful in sentiment than this figure of Anne receiving the rapturously desired child. Ghirlandajo's fine fresco in Santa Maria Novella, Florence, shows a magnificent interior, with Anne reclining on a rich couch. The riches of Joachim and Anne are shown in the sumptuousness of the room, the beauty of the utensils used in bathing the child in the foreground, and the rich dresses of the noble ladies who come to congratulate the mother. Albert Dürer gives a homely German interior: the women are interested in eating and drinking; one has fallen asleep. There is nothing to differentiate the scene from any other middle-class birth, if a very incongruous angel were not swinging a censer in a decidedly interpolated manner above.

Andrea del Sarto has a great fresco in the Church of the Nunciata in Florence which is treated much in the same manner as Ghirlandajo's, except that angels scatter flowers, and Joachim lies asleep on a couch. In all the great Italian pictures this event is treated in a beautiful



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LADY

*From the fresco by Ghirlandajo in the Church of S. Maria Novella, Florence*



and tender manner, casting a halo of sanctity over one of the commonest of domestic events.

'And the child was so strong that when she was nine months old her mother put her upon the ground, and when she had walked nine steps she came again to her mother's lap, and her mother caught her up and said, "As the Lord my God liveth, thou shalt not walk again upon this earth till I bring thee unto the Temple of the Lord." Accordingly she made her chamber a holy place and suffered nothing unclean to come near the child, but only undefiled daughters of Israel to wait upon her.

'When the child was a year old Joachim offered the child to the chief priests, and they blessed her, and he made a great feast, and the people rejoiced, and Anne sang a song of thanksgiving to the Lord, and put the child to rest in the room she had consecrated, and went and ministered at the feast to her guests. And when the child was two years old Joachim said to Anne, "Let us take her to the Temple of the Lord that we may perform our vow." But Anne said, "Let her wait the third year, lest she should be at a loss to know her father." And Joachim said, "Let us wait."'

There are a few beautiful and touching pictures of the early life of the child who was to spend

so few years under her parents' roof, for only for three years did Anne and Joachim keep their treasure before they yielded her back to the God who gave her. During the middle ages, when it was actually believed that the greatest good this life could compass was to render it back to God, S. Anne was a very favourite saint. She was looked upon as the patron and pattern of maternal self-sacrifice, a quality which the world resistlessly demands whatever its form of faith, or unbelief, may be.

She was the patroness of needlewomen, lace-makers, and housekeepers. She was much invoked by the poor. The legend relates that she and Joachim distributed much of their wealth to the poor as a thanksgiving for the birth of their child. In Giotto's picture of the nativity of the Virgin the servants are distributing bread to the poor at the door.

In various early miniatures of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, S. Anne is represented attending to her child. In a Greek MS. in the Vatican she is covering her up in her little bed. S. Anne instructing her daughter to read forms the subject of one of the most beautiful frescoes existent, by Pinturicchio, over a door in S. Onofrio in Rome. The figures are half-length, clothed in the deep and lovely blue which is

like the deepest sea, or the clearest heavens by night, and which is peculiarly Pinturicchio's own. Behind is a glowing sky, against which the tender herbs of the field are outlined. The little girl, a model of sweet seriousness, is bending over the book on her mother's knee. S. Anne has something of the gentle majesty of the Byzantine school in her draped and inclined head. Murillo, in the Madrid Gallery, has a beautiful picture of S. Anne teaching her little girl to read, while angels hover over them; and Rubens has another of the same subject in the Antwerp Museum. In Vienna there is a picture of S. Anne braiding and adorning her child's long golden hair, while angels look on devoutly. These all pay scant regard to the legend, which says that when she was three years old her parents took her to the Temple.

The legend continues: 'And when the child was three years old Joachim said, "Let us invite the daughters of the Hebrews who are undefiled, and let them each take a lamp, and let them be lighted, that the child may not turn back again, and her mind be set against the Temple of the Lord." And they did this, and they came to the foot of the fifteen stairs (which accord to the fifteen psalms of degrees), which ascended to the Temple. And the parents put

the child upon the steps, and the child went up the steps without the help of any one to lead or lift her, and the high priest received her, and blessed her, and he placed her upon the third step of the altar, and the Lord gave her grace, and she danced with her feet, and all the house of Israel loved her. And her parents made great offerings, and, having perfected their vow, left the Virgin, with other virgins, in the apartments of the Temple, and they returned home praising God.'

As far as I know there is no picture of this charming incident of the little child's delight in the beautiful Temple of the Lord. Pictures of her abound, usually far too old, ascending the steps. In Giotto's picture at Padua, she is a young girl of perhaps ten, very simple and sweet. Her mother, Anne, stands behind her on the steps, just touching her as she presents her to the high priest. Attendants stand at the foot with offerings, and a group of spectators look on.

Taddeo Gaddi treats the subject in the same simple and pathetic manner, while Andrea Orcagna's picture, in San Michele in Florence, is still simpler and has only three principal figures.

Ghirlandajo shows a magnificent porch. The high priest, and another priest, and the young virgins who are to be her companions, advance





THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LADY  
*From the painting by Carpaccio in the Brera, Milan*

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joyously to meet the Virgin ascending the steps. The subject is grandly treated, and with his usual wealth of luxurious accessories.

Titian, in his well-known picture in the Accademia, Venice, is equally sumptuous. The high priest stands at the top of a great flight of steps. A group of men and women are collected at the foot, and half-way up the steps the child Mary, with light radiating from her, holds out her hand. She is apparently about seven years of age. The sweet childish action of the little figure as it turns to take a smiling farewell of its mother, redeems Sodoma's picture of the Presentation from the ostentatious dulness of its surroundings. The carefully draped and posed crowds that stand idly before the spectator in the colonnaded portico of the Temple interest the spectator no more than they are interested in the maternal sacrifice of Anne, who kneels to offer her dearest treasure. The high priest bends to take the smiling child, and this little group is full of grace and sentiment.

Carpaccio's simple and beautiful picture shows Mary kneeling on the next to the top step, while the group of parents and friends at the foot look on in reverent admiration. An attendant holds in the foreground a unicorn, the ancient emblem of chastity.

Albert Dürer and Hans Memling include this scene in their series of the life of the Virgin.

‘But Mary continued in the Temple as a Dove, and was educated there, and as she advanced in years, increased also in perfection. For every day she had the conversation of angels, which preserved her from all sorts of evil, and caused her to abound in all good things.’

There is a lovely picture in the Brera, Milan, by Luini, who of all painters was best qualified to show the sweet simplicity of a pure girl's life, where she is instructing her companions, who listen and look up at her with reverent faces. She is dressed in a simple light-blue tunic, and has long golden hair.

Agnolo Gaddi in Florence paints her surrounded by the young virgins, her companions.

There is a fine antique tapestry at Rheims which shows her embroidering, and Guido (Lord Ellesmere's Gallery) paints her as embroidering a robe.

On the stalls of the Cathedral at Amiens, Mary is represented as studying, with a number of books around her, and in an old Office of the Blessed Virgin, in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, she is represented as spinning, with an angel attending her.

Study, needlework, and spinning, with the

devout recitation of the Psalter, was the conventual life led by the little nun of the Temple until her fourteenth year, when we read—

‘So that when at length she arrived to her fourteenth year the wicked could not lay anything to her charge, and all good persons acquainted with her admired her life and conversation.’

In modern times, Burne-Jones, in his fine window in S. James’s, Weybridge, is one of the few artists who have treated this subject.

There is a beautiful and devotional picture by Rossetti in his earliest manner, representing S. Anne teaching her child, but this is sadly marred by the plain features he has given the Virgin. She is embroidering a lily which is held upright in a pot by a child angel. The face of S. Anne is fine and dignified.

S. Joachim is supposed to have died before the Annunciation, but a tradition exists of a vision which was granted to him on his death-bed of the glorious and awful destiny of his child. With his last breath he blessed her with a majesty of triumph in his tones, as of one who saw her sufferings and her glory. His wife is supposed to have passed to her rest in ignorance of the future of her daughter. When S. Anne appears in the same picture as Our Lady and her Child, it is in a devotional and not historical sense.

The next event in Our Lady's life treated in art is her betrothal, or, as it is generally called, her marriage. According to the Protevangelion, Mary and Joseph were only betrothed, not actually married, when the Annunciation took place; this is stated in the eighteenth verse of the first chapter of the Gospel of S. Matthew.

The 'Gospel of Mary' relates that being come to a marriageable age, the high priest sought for a husband for her, and there being a difficulty in the matter, as the Virgin was vowed by her parents to the Lord, the high priest commanded the widowers among the people to bring their rods, and he laid them before the Lord, and when he fetched the rods, that of Joseph had a dove resting upon it, or, as another tradition says, it blossomed into a lily. So the high priest said, 'thou art the person to take the Virgin of the Lord.' But Joseph refused, saying, 'I have children and she is young, and I fear lest I should appear ridiculous.' But the high priest warned him of Korah, who contradicted the Lord, so Joseph was afraid, and consented. When the usual ceremonies of the betrothal were over, he returned to his own city of Bethlehem to set his house in order, and make preparations for the marriage, but the Virgin returned to her parents' house in Galilee, with

the virgins her companions. It was not until the fourteenth century that pictures of S. Joseph were common, but still later, after S. Theresa's choosing him as her patron, pictures of him abounded, usually with the rod, blossoming as a lily in his hand.

The tradition referred to in the apocryphal gospels that S. Joseph was a widower and an elderly man, was rigidly adhered to by all the early artists, and certain of the Germans and later Italians fell even into the error of representing him as a decrepit old man, not at all a suitable protector for a young girl. The great Italian and German artists show him as a man of forty or fifty, of a mild amiable countenance. When he bears a lily, and not the blossoming rod, it is emblematical of the purity of his relations with the Virgin. In the decadent days of art he becomes a young, rather dressy person, with an amorous countenance, quite foreign to the gentle dreamer of the gospels.

The early Italian artists, following the ritual of their own day with regard to the betrothal part of the marriage service, represented the marriage as taking place in the open air, in front of, or under a portico; that is to say, a church door. Mary, mild and young, and beautiful, is attended by the maidens of the Temple; Joseph by the

disappointed suitors; while the high priest stands between them and joins their hands. From Giotto to Raphael this traditional treatment was generally followed. Taddeo Gaddi, Fra Angelico, Ghirlandajo and Perugino, Pinturicchio and Raphael all follow it.

The German artists represent the ceremony as taking place in, or at the door of, one of their own richly-decorated Gothic churches, dress Mary in elaborate furs and embroidery, and turn Joseph into a stout gold-chained burgher, and the high priest into a fully-vested Catholic priest.

In Giotto's series in Padua we have a departure from the traditional treatment, for he makes the marriage take place inside a temple, before an altar.

Fra Angelico, curiously enough, permits one of the suitors to indulge in a violent attitude of despair, which is contrary to his usual gentleness.

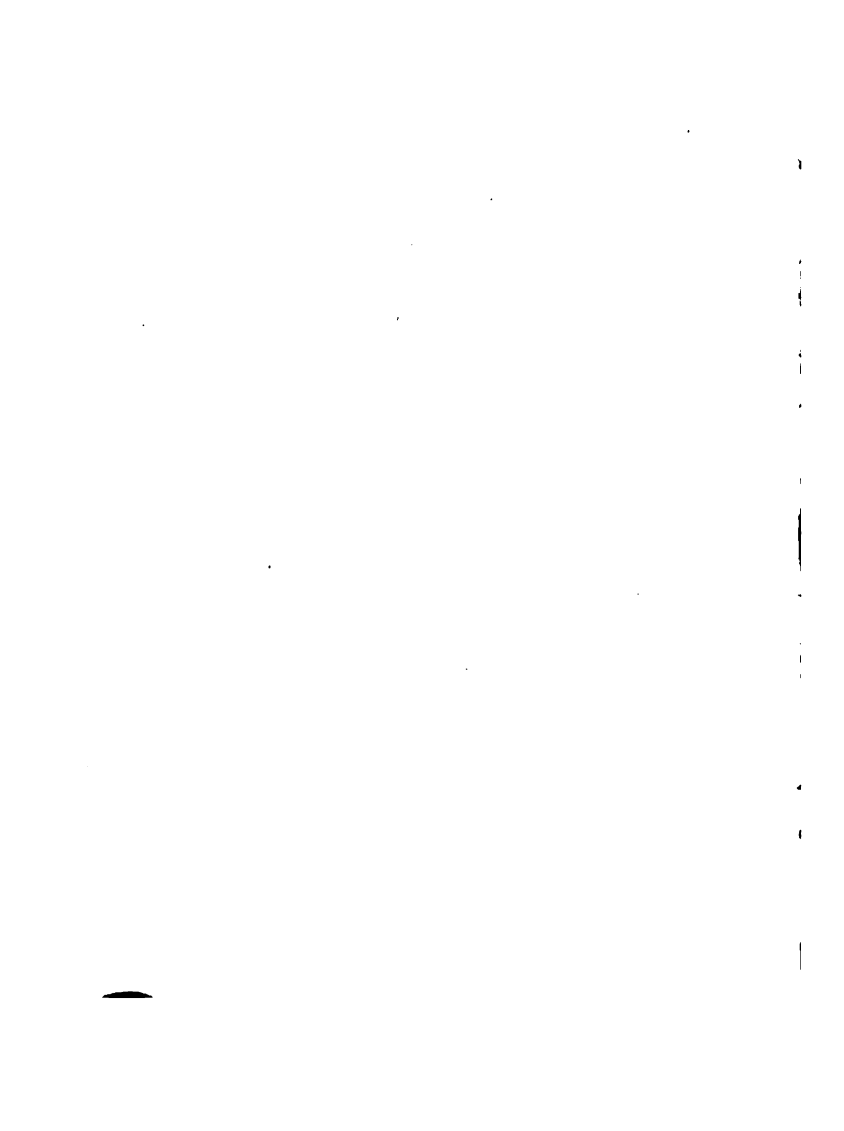
Pinturicchio, in his beautiful 'Sposalizio' in Santa Maria del Popolo at Rome, omits the maidens from the Temple, with the exception of a youthful figure which may be a girl or boy, and shows seven suitors who look on reverently as the high priest joins Joseph's and Mary's hands.

Ghirlandajo's fine picture suffers from the bad drawing of some children in the foreground, and





THE MARRIAGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN  
*From the painting by the "Master of the Life of the Blessed Virgin" in the Old Pinakothek, Munich*



the violent attitude of the suitors, who seem to be raising a disturbance. In the distance are musicians playing.

Raphael's well-known 'Sposalizio' of the Brera is a most noble and dignified conception. His figure of Mary has much of the attitude and lovely grace of Perugino's, whose influence is conspicuous in the harmonious composition. Mary is ideally lovely in Raphael's best manner, her fair hair showing through the gauzy veil, her figure ethereally graceful. Joseph is gravely dignified, and the suitors graceful and melancholy.

Girolamo da Cotignola has a picture in the Bologna Gallery which gives a mystical treatment. A sibyl and a prophet are seated on the altar steps, and Mary and Joseph stand between them. As a rule nothing of a supernatural nature is introduced into these pictures of the betrothal, but the subject is treated from the simple natural point of view, if one excepts the dove on Joseph's rod which is occasionally depicted.

Rubens does not introduce the disappointed suitors. Mabuse crowns the Virgin, and the high priest wraps a stole round her and Joseph's hands, as done to this day in a Catholic marriage. His fine picture is marred by two ugly chained apes writhing on the floor.

Luini has a lovely fresco of which only a fragment remains in the Brera. In this Joseph and Mary return hand in hand to their home together.

This scene, so rarely painted, properly closes the early life of the Virgin. From henceforth she is no longer either the little nun of the Temple or the simple village girl. She is the Link between God and man ; the creature on whose decision hung for one awful moment the fate of mankind. Through her was the personality of the Holy Ghost first revealed to man ; by her the entire regeneration of the whole world accomplished.

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THE ANNUNCIATION  
*From the lunette by Luca della Robbia in the Hospital of the Innocents, Florence*

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ANNUNCIATION

**B**EFORE words took the place of pictures in the popular mind, the picture which told the longest story was naturally the most popular, and in the mystery of the Annunciation the whole doctrine of the Christian religion was summed up. In it was shown the Fatherhood of God, the mystery of the Trinity, the personality of the Holy Ghost, the Incarnation of the Son, and the Redemption of the world. The love of God in its utmost form was expressed by the figures of the angel, and the little girl of Nazareth. Not a church in Christendom, scarcely a street in a medieval town, was without its figures of the Spiritual Bride and the Angelic messenger.

Apart from its theological and devotional aspect, the simplicity of the subject, which lent itself to the highest imaginative treatment, as well as the most realistic, would in itself have made it

a favourite motive with artists. It is portrayed as an event, with all the natural accessories of time and place, but more frequently as a theological and devotional statement. Its earliest representation occurs on the walls of the catacomb of St. Priscilla in Rome, which the latest critics ascribe to the end of the first century. It is neither historical nor realistic in treatment, but doctrinal, and is a theological truth represented in the fewest possible lines. Mary is seated on a throne, symbolically expressive of dignity. The angel, clad in a priestly pallium, is without wings or sceptre, and stands with uplifted hands as a messenger.

The same grave and decorous attitudes occur in the mosaics on the arch of Santa Maria Maggiore, but here two angels, as Mary's guards, stand behind her. These attitudes, which are prescribed by the Greek formula for artists, were not exclusively adhered to much after the sixth century, for in some early ivories we see Mary standing to receive the angelic salutation. After the revival of art in Italy, we find sometimes (as in Giotto's 'Annunciation') both Mary and the angel kneeling, or, as in Simone Martini's most exquisite work, the angel kneels and Mary sits. It was reserved for the late Italian artists to represent the meek 'handmaid of the Lord' as



wildly terrified, or sinking in shame before a noisy and boisterous lad.

The expression given to Mary by all the best artists is that of gracious and lowly humility, dignified by absolute purity. Her beauty naturally varies with the ideals and skill of the painter, but it is always that of his utmost skill. She is always young, the traditional account gives her age as fourteen, a more mature age in those days in the East than with us now. It was intended to express the moment when the child merges into the woman. The veil shown by the early artists is gradually cast aside, and in later art her long fair hair hangs in girlish fashion over her shoulders.

The humble surroundings of the little home at Nazareth were deliberately set aside. The mystery to be represented was so great that the homely details of time and place fell away, and the greatest pictures of the Annunciation have either no background at all, except of gold or diaper-work, as Simone Martini's, or else they frankly represent the surroundings of the artist's own home. The cloistered yard in Florence can still be seen where Fra Angelico represented his meek Virgin and glorious youth-incarnate angel. Mary, as the Bride of the Eternal, was beyond conditions of time and place, and painters grew

to portray her as a royal lady, a crowned Queen ; her garments stiff with gold and jewels, her throne of ivory inlaid with precious stones. To the historical taste of the present day these pictures are less satisfactory than the purely mystical and simpler ones, but to the devout minds of the middle ages no accessory was held to be too magnificent to express the sublime importance of the event.

According to an old legend, Gabriel was accompanied by a host of lesser angels who did not presume to enter the presence of the recipient of the Divine favour with him, but remained outside. Very few artists have represented these attendant angels except Andrea del Sarto and Tintoretto, Francia and Fra Bartolommeo. Many of the early pictures represent Gabriel as descending from above, gliding without steps, and surrounded with celestial light. Nearly always he has wings, though the earliest examples omit these, and in the later artists they become rather ridiculous appendages. Raphael gives quite inefficient pinions, and the German artists often paint delicate swallow wings. Albert Dürer, in his 'Annunciation,' gives his angel magnificent sweeping pinions that could envelop him. He is generally represented as a youth of majestic mien and noble and dignified expression. In the

early Italian pictures he is fully and simply clothed in full and flowing robes like an acolyte's. German pictures frequently vest him in a gorgeous cope, clasped by jewels. Simone Martini crowns him with olive, and sometimes a coronet or fillet binds his hair, but usually it flows in waving curls about his neck. Frequently he carries a lily in his hand, sometimes a sceptre, as an emissary from the King of kings. Often he folds his hands meekly on his breast as he bows. There is absolutely no rule as to the attitude of the angel—he may stand or kneel, come gliding down as a beam of light, or enter by the door, as he does most frequently in German pictures. The Holy Dove is generally represented as flying along a ray of light proceeding from the Father straight to Mary, but he is not always introduced.

The Protevangelion relates that 'Mary had been chosen by lot to spin the true purple for the new veil for the Temple of the Lord, and she took the true purple with her to her own home to spin. And she took a jar, and went out to draw water, and heard a voice saying unto her, "Hail, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women."

'And she looked round to the right and to the

left, to see whence that voice came, and then trembling went into her house.'

The tradition from the early Fathers states that the Annunciation took place in the spring. There is an appropriateness in the advent of the Redeemer coinciding with the budding forth of the earth into blossom. From her going to the well for water, it has been inferred that the hour was the evening. Very few artists have chosen the more poetic outdoor setting for their pictures, and the favourite time among artists has been her return to the house.

In the numerous ivories and illuminations between the art of the Catacombs and the Renaissance, Mary is a draped and veiled majestic figure. In a sixth-century ivory in Ravenna, she is seated; in another she is standing, and with one hand draws her veil in modesty about her. The angel is of classical type, close curled, draped, and carrying a sceptre, and with the uplifted hand of a messenger. Precisely the same figures, more rudely executed, appear in Romanesque art of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In Giotto's simple, grand kneeling figures in Padua, we see in Mary the noble dignity of the 'Ecce Ancilla Domini.' The angel no longer bears the sceptre, but the olive of peace, or the white lily of purity.

There is an exquisite beauty of complete and girlish innocence and acquiescence in Pisanello's picture in Verona, where Our Lady's fair locks surround her gentle face under its dark hood, and the angel, still in the whirl of his glad descent, kneels before her. In all the early Italian pictures Mary's sweetness and humility, and a certain stately gracious girlishness, are the prevailing note. Self-consciousness, alarm, and terror, come in later art.

Absolute purity and beauty of sentiment are the especial characteristics of the mystical Annunciations of Fra Angelico. The Annunciation in the Oratorio del Gesù, at Cortona, is rather a typical example. The archangel, with great iridescent wings, glowing with colour, bends before the meek figure of Our Lady. She is seated under a colonnade, which gives a charming perspective of delicate columns and arches. A flower garden comes up to the pillars, in which every flower is carefully painted. Behind the fenced enclosure are a palm and an apple-tree, covered with fruit, and on a hill in the distance is seen the expulsion of the first Eve by an aureoled and winged figure. Very suggestive is this little picture of the sinful and the sinless woman thus brought into connection by the fulfilment of the Word of God.

In another Annunciation by Fra Angelico the scene is in a cloister. The angel, tall and serious, stands before a half-kneeling figure of Our Lady, surrounded by the plain white-washed walls and vaulted roof of the monastery.

Botticelli, in his wonderful Annunciation in the Uffizi, has made his angel dart like a falcon from heaven, his garments still in a whirl from the rapidity of his flight. He half kneels, half crouches at the feet of the Virgin, one hand upraised in the eager delivery of his salutation, the white lily in his arms bowed back by his dart through the air. Bending forward, with hands outstretched in startled deprecation, the Virgin turns in deepest humility towards him. She has scarcely time to know the purport of the vision. She is trembling, troubled, but not frightened; the meekest of God's creatures, but awful in her humility. It is the most marvellous rendering of a *moment*. It is the very instant of the 'Hail, Mary!' The Holy Dove has not yet come forth from the Father.

Another most exquisite instance of the mystical treatment of this subject is by Simone Martini, in which the fervid emotionalism of the Sienese sends a responding quiver through the spectator.

Mary's attitude, wholly self-possessed, yet responsive in every fibre of her being, half shrinks,



THE ANNUNCIATION

*From the painting by Simone di Martino in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence*





yet absolutely submits to the Divine decree. Simone, in his intense appreciation of the spiritual significance of her response, has been lifted above considerations of portraiture, and the rhythmical contours of Mary's figure are a poetical abstract of womanhood. The olive crowned angel kneels before her as the messenger of peace.

Fra Filippo Lippi, singularly fascinating as his picture is, marks one of the early steps towards a secular treatment of this subject. Mary, pure and beautiful, lays her hand on her heart as she listens with downcast eyes to the winged messenger, who holds a lily in his hands. All the dainty accessories of this flower-loving artist are exquisitely executed, but it has also an air of being very carefully composed.

With the growth of love of mere ornament in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Mary and the angel became less and less the motive of the picture. In Carlo Crivelli's wonderful picture of architectural sumptuousness in the National Gallery, it is the gorgeous decoration of the great building which is impressive, not the rather commonplace kneeling girl, nor the stolid, fantastically-dressed angel, incongruously attended by a Bishop.

Mariotto Albertinelli goes still farther, and introduces the figure of the Father standing over a host of angels in the sky above a large building,

while Mary, full of conscious grace, elegantly holds a book in her hand.

Perugino's lovely Virgin in Montefalco is absolutely simple and beautiful, while Filippo Lippi's somewhat matronly Madonna is the ultimate expression of rapturous acquiescence to the Divine will, and the angel is a wondrous celestial messenger.

Francia and Fra Bartolommeo introduce attendant saints. Almost every great painter has left a record of his idea of the Annunciation, and it is impossible in a short space even to enumerate their works.

The Venetian school emphasise the stupendous *action* of the event. The angels dart like a beam of light through the air. In Paolo Veronese's picture his crimson robes stream behind him, and the Virgin sinks back half in terror of such a lightning messenger. Tintoretto's angel swoops as with a whirlwind from the heavens, and his pathway is marked by a stream of cherubs. Tintoretto places the scene of the Annunciation amid a ruined vestibule, significant of the desolation of a sin-consumed world. With the noise of a carpenter's shop in her ears, and Joseph, all unconscious of the angelic presence, working quietly at his trade, Mary hears the voice of the Spirit.

Among the Northern painters the scene usually takes place in a richly furnished and decorated chamber. Often the spinning-wheel is introduced, and a pitcher of water, fruit on a dish or basket; sometimes a bed or comfortable couch. In a beautiful example by Jan van Eyck, Mary is standing by an altar in a recess in a room, with her hand on an open book, while she turns to listen to an angel clothed in a rich cope, and carrying a sceptre, who addresses her,—a contrast indeed to the intense emotion of the Sienese masters, or the attempt to render the vivid spirituality of Tintoretto's messenger.

Albert Dürer, in his series of the life of the Virgin, has a fine winged figure of the angel, who with uplifted hand addresses the rather plain, commonplace woman, over whose head floats the Holy Dove. The major part of the picture is taken up with architectural details, and the angel has evidently just come down a flight of steps from a doorway.

Rossetti's Annunciation in the National Gallery may be regarded as a modern attempt to go back to the simplicity of early treatments. But the attenuated, puzzled girl on the pallet bed is a wholly modern conception of the chosen among women. Mary's wondering over 'What manner of salutation this should be,' is dramatic, and

the whole picture is full of interest, much more so than Burne-Jones's beautiful painting, where one is a little oppressed by the weight of the angel as he is slowly dropping from above. Mary is standing in rapt awe in the porch of her house, and but for her abnormal length of leg would be a most beautiful figure.

With the growth of extraneous detail the spiritual significance of the two sinless figures fades into a mere semi-domestic historical event of not much more account than the angel and Tobias. The theological import of the catacombs and mosaics, and early ivories, was more or less eclipsed by the struggle after mere beauty of form and colour, which in the art of the last century dropped still further into mere sentimentalism tinctured with archæology.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE VISITATION

THE Protevangelion, adding detail to S. Luke, relates that Mary, when she had finished the work for the Temple, carried it to the high priest, and filled with joy she went to her cousin Elisabeth in the hill country.

To Elisabeth, who walked in the commandments of the Lord, was given the privilege first to hail the Redeemer and His mother. Her cry, 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,' is still uttered by millions of voices daily in the salutation of the Angelus. The humility of the truly great breaks forth in the words, 'And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me.'

Whether at these inspired and most touching words Elisabeth sank on her knees to clasp the mother of her Lord, as Luca della Robbia most beautifully represents her, or whether the two

women met in a long embrace, as Cimabue most ardently expresses it, is immaterial to the proper significance of the subject.

In the earliest representation in the Catacombs the two women stand.

Pinturicchio has great grace and dignity in his grand fresco in the Appartamenti Borgia. He has made Elisabeth tenderly draw the Virgin towards her with a reverential wonder at the silent awed girl's mystery. On Mary's face is still the reflection of the glory of the Angelic Presence, her downcast eyes can scarcely see the earth from the lingering brightness of the glimpse of heaven which has filled them. When she lifts those downward eyes they will be filled with the reflection of the Light of the Holy Ghost.

His other picture is more conventional; the women look in each other's faces as they embrace. An angel stands on either side.

Mariotto Albertinelli's picture in the Uffizi is one of the best known on this subject. It is exceedingly simple in treatment, and touching in sentiment. Mary is stately yet humble, Elisabeth very pathetic in her aged happiness. They stand framed in a great arch, and nothing is allowed to detract from the majesty and nobility of the two figures.

One of Raphael's least satisfactory pictures is



THE VISITATION

*From the painting by Mariotto Albertinelli in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence*





that of the Visitation. There are only two figures, and Mary has a self-conscious bashful expression almost of shame. Elisabeth stoops and looks admiringly at her.

Lucas van Leyden has presented a tender and beautiful affectionateness in Elisabeth's embrace. The contrast between the hooded old woman and the fair girl, with her long hair streaming over her and her wondering face, is very fine. Most of the Northern painters seem to have seen little in the subject beyond the meeting of two gossips to talk over an interesting event, and they represent it as a scene of ordinary daily life. Rembrandt places the meeting in a garden. Joseph holds the ass on which Mary has travelled, a black attendant takes her cloak off, and Elisabeth hastens down the steps to receive her guest.

In Sodoma's Visitation in S. Bernardino in Siena, Elisabeth sinks on her knee as Mary takes her hand. The elder woman's face is full of tenderest reverence, and with the beauty of resignation. The Virgin bends forward and caressingly places her arm about her shoulder. The crowd of attendants at the sides somewhat detract from the central figures.

The account of Mary's return and Joseph's puzzled demeanour respecting her has not been a very favourite one with artists. The traditional

account says that Joseph and Mary were brought before the high priest, and Joseph was made to drink of the water of trial, and the Virgin with tears protested her innocence; and the water doing Joseph no harm they were allowed to depart. In the homilies of James the Monk, a series of pictures of this ordeal of Joseph and Mary is shown. There is no hint in any of the legendary accounts of Mary's attempting to justify herself, or to explain matters. The first piercing of the sword must have entered that pure and lowly heart at being the object of suspicion and scorn. Joseph's dream and Joseph's repentance are not common in art, but Luini has a most touching little picture of Joseph in his workshop sleeping, while an angel stands beside him, and Mary is sewing at a window. Tissot has an excellent little drawing of Joseph full of doubt and perplexity, watching his wife as she walks along the road.

There is a tradition that Joseph, as a just man, asked Mary's pardon after his dream, and this scene is carved on one of the stalls of Amiens Cathedral, also above a door in Nôtre Dame in Paris. Alessandro Tiarini's picture in the Louvre is one of the best of this unusual subject.

Tradition says that Joseph placed Mary on an ass to go to Bethlehem, and when they came near

to the city Mary said, 'Take me down from the ass.' S. Luke tells us, 'There was no room for them in the Inn.'

This incident has not been a favourite subject with artists, yet it is full of potentialities. Joseph, full of perplexity and care, in charge of the maid who had brought him a vision from God; Mary in the sorest straits a child of Eve can be in, intensified by the inexplicable mysteriousness of an unparalleled experience, and filled with all the natural foreboding and awe of approaching maternity; the contempt and indifference exercised towards their poverty and distress by the inn-keeper and the busy world, for even before His birth did our Lord knock at the doors of men's hearts, and find them shut.

There is a Greek ivory, said to be of the sixth century, representing Mary seated wearily on the ass, with her arm round Joseph's neck, as he tenderly supports her.

And Joseph hastened to fetch a midwife, and the Protevangelion continues, 'As I was going I looked up into the air, and I saw the clouds astonished, and the fowls of the air stopping in the midst of their flight; and I looked down towards the earth . . . and I saw the sheep dispersed, and yet the sheep stood still, and the shepherd lifted up his hand, and his hand con-

tinued up, and I looked into a river, and saw the kids with their mouths to the water, and they did not drink.'

That Nature was all arrested and stopped in its course at the moment of the Redeemer's birth was a widespread belief in the middle ages. In Celtic countries, where animals are so much more kindly treated than among Latin and Teutonic nations, the mouths of the dumb beasts are still said to open on the celestial night, and numberless are the tales told of those who have heard mysterious secrets of nature from the mouths of the animals among whom the Lord lay. Mrs. Jameson confesses to be afraid to hint that possibly the Lord's birth may have brought blessing even to the beasts. The Catholic Church so far accepts the idea, that she has provided a special service for the blessing of the animals, whose symbol is in heaven itself.

There is an old tradition mentioned by S. Jerome of the presence of the ox and ass at Christ's birth, and in an ancient Latin hymn, *De Nativitate Dei*, they are said to have warmed Him by their breath. The text, 'He shall lie down between the ox and the ass,' was thus literally interpreted, and in all the earliest representations of the Nativity the two beasts are introduced. S. Ambrose speaks of the ass as the symbol of the Gentiles, and

S. Gregory of Nyssa of the ox bound in the bondage of the Jewish law.

In early art the ox and ass in their dumb way recognise the presence of their Creator, sometimes by kneeling, oftenest with that wistful kindness in their patient eyes we are all so familiar with. It is only in later art that the ass is simply lazy and the ox stupidly indifferent.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NATIVITY

THE Divine Maternity was regarded as the apotheosis of woman. Henceforward her Elder Brethren, the Angels, were her attendants. She walks wrapped in the sanctity of divinity, so all-embracing that the rudest and poorest woman is enveloped in that mysterious holiness which encloses the Mother of God. Its far-reaching consequences were but dimly apprehended by early artists, for though the earliest picture we have of Mary is that of her as the fulfilment of prophecy, the Mother of the Light of the World, it required many generations to represent Mary in pictures of the Nativity as other than the suffering Mother. She is represented in early art as reclining on a couch, while S. Joseph is frequently asleep, as if worn out with watching. Yet the Greek Manual is emphatic in its direction that Mary is to be represented as kneeling beside the

cradle of her Son. But it was not until the early Renaissance that we find her in this posture. A very early Sarcophagus represents her as sitting by the Child, who is in a basketwork cradle, and three shepherds approaching with their offerings.

The more men pondered on the mystery the more necessary did it become to depict the Virgin Mother adoring her Son. His mother's worship should be the first offered to Him. It was not in pain and weariness that the Divine Son was brought forth, but, as Jeremy Taylor says, 'in the attitude of a worshipper, and in the midst of glorious thoughts and speculations.' The greatest and most beautiful pictures of the Nativity are those which, disregarding the restrictions of time and place, represent it, not as an event of time, but as the perpetual and life-giving mystery of Redemption. From the earliest ages angels are present, either standing as solemn guardians of the Mother and Child as on a fresco in S. Urbano alla Caffarella, or they hover over the roof, and flutter in the sky, 'these birds of God,' as Dante calls them, surging and singing with delight.

In all early examples Mary is veiled, but in later art the veil gradually disappears. The season has always been supposed to be the winter.

Mrs. Jameson discriminates between the pictures she calls 'La Madre Pia,' and the Nativity devotionally treated. In the former Mary and the angels alone adore Him, or the infant S. John is present. I propose to speak here only of those pictures which include S. Joseph or attendants.

There is an old tradition which speaks of the actual birthplace of our Lord being a cave in the rocks. S. Paula, writing to Marcella at Rome from Bethlehem in the fifth century, says, 'It is in a fissure of the rocks that the Architect of the firmament was born'—the grotto shown in Bethlehem. This tradition is in accordance with the Scripture, for such caves were and are used as stables in the East, sometimes with the addition of doors or a shed in front.

Both ideas are represented in early art: the earliest rude outline in the Catacombs only shows the Child lying on a wooden frame with animals beside Him.

In a mosaic in S. Maria in Trastevere and in a twelfth century mosaic in Palermo, Mary lies on a couch in a fissure of a hill, and this treatment is not uncommon. Giotto and his followers discarded the cave and show a slight wooden structure with open sides placed against a hill. Later artists frequently omit both, and are con-



tent with the open country, with a bit of ruined masonry or a fragment of a roof, or pillar in the background.

Niccolò Pisano preserved the traditional repose of Mary in the sculptures of Pisa. In his and his followers' works we find the grave lean woman of Byzantine art transformed into the statuesque burly Greek goddess, who reclines indolently among her attendants and takes little or no interest in her Child.

With Giotto (Padua) we get the more human aspect of Mary. She still reclines on her couch, but she has turned over to encircle with her arm the swaddled Babe as she gazes at Him with tenderness.

Orcagna represents her as sitting by her Child's cradle and gently drawing the covering over Him, and in the Church of Assisi, Giotto shows her sitting on the ground holding her Child before her.

Ottaviano Nelli (Trinci Palace, Foligno) is one of the earliest artists to represent her as kneeling, and he shows the Child not in swaddling clothes, but unclothed in a blaze of light.

There is a curious picture of Taddeo Gaddi's in which Mary is pointing to the Child in the manger, and S. Joseph appears to be gravely considering Him.

Perugino gives the simple devotional aspect of the Nativity with that touch of 'quietism' which has such a fascination for Northern peoples. In his pictures in the Vannucci Gallery, Perugia, and in the Villa Albani in Rome, Mary and Joseph kneel on each side of the Infant, who lies on a corner of Mary's mantle. Angels kneel behind them in the Roman picture, in the other they float in the sky, and the two shepherds kneel in the middle distance. Over all is that air of serene and sunny open-air devotion so characteristic of his works.

Carlo Crivelli shows a ruined shed with an angel escorting one of the shepherds.

So great a number of the great masters have painted this subject that only a few can be alluded to. Gradually the accessories of time and place came to be discarded, and the pictures of the greatest artists are not of the Nativity as merely an historical event, but of a great theological and devotional eternity. They culminated in Botticelli's exquisite poem which hangs on our National Gallery walls. A reproduction gives but a faint idea of its exquisite thrilling grace of ecstatic adoration. In it is contained the story of our redemption. The greatest mystery of creation lies before His mother, finger on lip, to enforce that compact of silence in which Almighty



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

*From the painting by Botticelli in the National Gallery, London*



God seems to love best to work : above are the heavens where angels are unable to contain their ecstasy that humanity is redeemed. The open shed typifies the Church which contains the Incarnate Word and slumbering mankind. Without lies the dark and tangled forest of the world, with the day-dawn faintly glimmering behind. Below the earth are the fires of purgatory burning away the earthly dross from men's souls so that they embrace with glad rapture the angels who bear to them the news of the Saviour's birth. It is the most mystic and the most far-reaching of all the many Nativities painted.

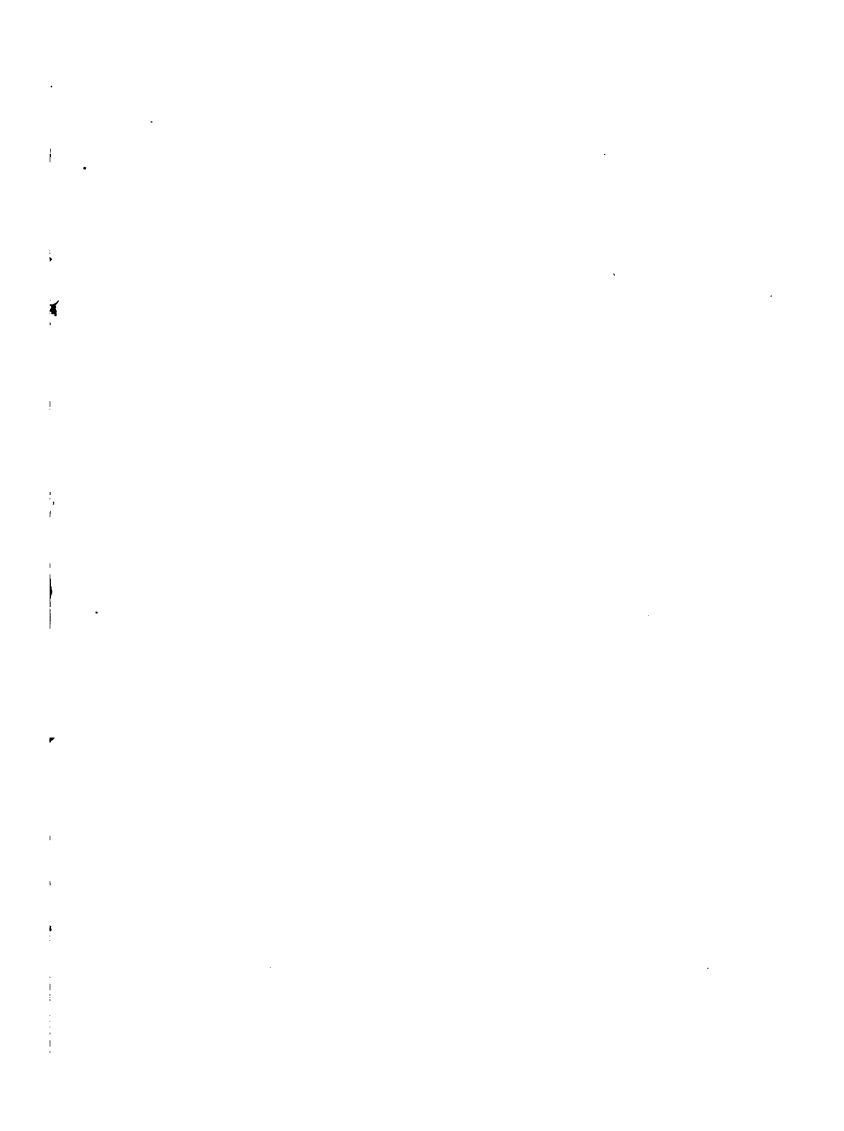
One of the most interesting Nativities is that partly finished picture of Piero della Francesca (National Gallery 908). Original in conception and treatment, with the Umbrian deep religious feeling, this, though it retains the conventional accessories, has broken through all former treatments. The Child lies on the ground, and His mother kneels beside him. A group of angels, two of whom play on lutes, stand as choir boys would stand, and sing and play. They are wingless and frankly humanised angels, but still one feels that they are angels. Joseph is seated in the background and appears to be holding a discussion with two men, probably the shepherds, one of whom points upwards, possibly

to emphasise his remark. Joseph has an elaborate air of unconcern as if to disclaim all connection with the figures in the foreground. In early pictures he usually takes this attitude of aloofness. Probably it is intended to show that no idea of paternity could be attributed to him. It is chiefly among the German and Flemish painters that he occupies a prominent part.

In a Nativity by Luca Signorelli in our National collection, the Child lies on the ground and Mary kneels behind Him, with the angels peeping over her shoulders to see Him. Joseph, a grave and dignified figure, sits with folded hands.

Mary in Luini's picture has the lovely face we are so familiar with in his work. She kneels with folded hands before her Child, who is supported by an angel. A child-angel holds a cross before His eyes, and angels hover above. S. Joseph is just entering, and folds his hands as he gazes with mild adoring face at the lovely group.

The majority of the pictures of the Nativity introduce the shepherds, and may more properly be called 'The Adoration of the Shepherds.' It is curious to observe that in early art this subject is rare in comparison with the Adoration of the Magi. The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles seemed of greater importance than the





THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

*From the painting by Correggio in the Royal Gallery, Dresden*



Jewish shepherds' worship. The majority of later pictures of the Nativity introduce the shepherds in the background, sometimes listening to the angels, sometimes making their way towards the stable. Frequently they bring as offerings a young lamb, or some fruit. In Venetian pictures they are often accompanied by a crowd of women, children, sheep and dogs. An old tradition speaks of the apostles SS. Simon and Jude being among them. It is a favourite subject with the later artists, possibly because of the picturesque contrast of peasant men to the delicacy of the Mother and Child. They are apt to degenerate into simple stage shepherds and become rather ludicrous, as in a curious example in the National Gallery, where Mary casts a coquettish glance at the shepherds. A perfect contrast is shown in Luca Signorelli's Nativity (No. 1133), where the serious middle-aged men kneel prayerfully before the Christ in company with His mother and the angels.

Both Rembrandt and Correggio use the beautiful idea of representing light as radiating from the little starlike body of the Christ. Correggio's well-known picture does not need description. The startled attitude of the shepherds and the serene absorption of the mother are exquisite, but it is sadly marred by a long naked thigh which

protrudes from above amid a mass of drapery, and three frog-like hands ; presumably they are angelic, but they do not add to the dignity or beauty of the picture.

In Rembrandt (Pinakothek, Munich) the mother lifts the veil, and the divine light penetrates the dusty stable, notwithstanding which S. Joseph carries a candle for the shepherds to see the Child by as they crouch around, and some figures behind hold a dim lantern. The effect of light and shade is very fine, and the picture one of his most devout and beautiful.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

**T**HE two favourite subjects relating to the Blessed Virgin in the Catacombs are the Annunciation and the Adoration of the Magi. There are more than twenty instances of the latter, and though the number of figures introduced varies, the attitudes of the Virgin Mother and her Child are almost always the same.

Mary is seated on a species of throne, and holds her hand as if in welcome to the Magi, who, clad in tunics and pointed Phrygian caps, advance, bearing large flat dishes or baskets in their hands. Their number varies from three to six. The advent of these mysterious personages, their majestic passage across the scene, and their complete disappearance, is one of the most striking and dramatic episodes that history provides. Numerous legends grew around them. One of these relates that they were Shem, Ham, and

Japhet, who were miraculously preserved in a cavern on Mount Ararat to represent their descendants in doing homage to Christ.

This is perhaps why one of them is often represented as a negro. Somehow mixed with this is a claim of the Armenian Church that the Magi were kings of Armenia, and first brought the faith to that country.

Another legend relates that when the Apostle S. Thomas visited India he found and baptized them there, and afterwards they were martyred by the heathen. The Empress Helena found their bodies, and they were brought to Milan by the Crusaders, and were afterwards translated to Cologne, where they still remain. By the fourteenth century their names, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar, are found, and rules were laid down for their representation as old, middle-aged, and young. Their names are often used in Germany with more or less magical intentions. When the title 'kings' was applied to them is not known. The gospel word 'Magi' merely denotes Persian priests or sages: astronomers and persons of importance they undoubtedly must have been.

Judging from the context the star does not appear to have been of such a nature that the general populace would have observed it, but only students of the heavens. The importance

## THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI 121

attached by them to the portent is shown by the nature of their gifts. Gold, the gift to kings; Incense, the offering to God; Myrrh, the sweet spice for the burial of His manhood.

In the very earliest treatment of this subject the Child is quiescent in His mother's arms, but in the mosaic in the church of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome the Child is seated alone on a pedestal with his hand raised in benediction, but everywhere else He is seated on His mother's lap. His attitude varies from the tightly swaddled infant, apparently unconscious of the homage offered Him, yet shining with a divine light which illumines the humble surroundings, to the mysterious divine Child, raising His little hand in benediction. There was nothing incongruous in the old artists in thus representing Him, an infant a few days old, displaying His wisdom and power, for He was the Christ from His birth.

The Church of S. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, built by Theodoric the Goth about the year 500, as an Arian Church, was reconstructed for Catholic worship in 570, which is probably the date of the great mosaic frieze, one of the most striking instances of mosaic decoration. On one side of the nave a long procession of martyrs carry their crowns to the enthroned Christ who is seated between angels. On the other side of the

nave the three Magi head a long row of female martyrs who come to lay their crowns at the feet of the infant Christ who is seated on His mother's knee. There is a stately and solemn majesty about these grave robed figures. The Child is fully draped and has a cruciform nimbus. He raises His hand in benediction. He is seated squarely on His mother's lap and her hand sustains Him. The figures are serene and motionless, much less animated than the martyrs and angels. They are symbols, deliberately placed by their immobility above mutability. It is not merely a question here of decadent art, though doubtless partly so, because the figures of the Magi, though stiff, are extraordinarily full of action. We see in this mosaic the true Byzantine spirit which sought to reduce all art, emotion and theology, to fixed and unalterable rules. From the Ravenna Madonna, and many others, we can trace the gradual extinction of the old Roman catacomb ideals, of the living, supplicating, tender Mother, to the Byzantine, implacable, scarcely human Goddess.

This manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles was more and more vividly expressed as art emerged from its swaddling clothes. All the accessories of gold and jewels, princely robes, trains of attendants, camels and horses, and the

## THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI 123

paraphernalia of great monarchs, are represented as doing honour to the King of kings. Gradually the fancy of the painters developed the lowly stable to a gorgeous palace, and Mary, instead of wearing her modest veil, is crowned and robed like a queen, seated on a magnificent throne, with all the luxuries of art and wealth at her command, enjoying in the painter's fancy all that his love could heap around her. The representation of a historical fact grew to a devotional expression of love and admiration, which it is difficult for the modern mind quite to enter into, and the taste of to-day prefers the stable of Giotto to the ruined temple of Correggio. There is something particularly beautiful and devotional in Giotto's picture in Padua. The stable is conventionally represented by a slight open wooden structure. The Virgin is seated under it holding her tightly swaddled Child upon her knee and presenting Him to the aged bare-headed king who devoutly presses his lips to the little foot. Her head is bent, she is sweetly serious and wondering. Beside her S. Joseph stands with bowed head and folded hands. Two kings, still wearing their crowns, stand behind bearing their gifts, and waiting to take their turn of prostrate adoration; behind them an attendant holds two camels. But the quaintest and greatest character-

istic of the picture is that in Giotto's eyes the Babe and His mother were too dignified personages to occupy themselves with the things of the world, and he places an angel by them to receive the offerings of the kings, as a monarch has his presents handed to an attendant. Later and less devout painters have sometimes had the atrocious taste to represent the Divine Child as eagerly plunging His hand into the coffer, or clutching at the gold pieces. Sometimes S. Joseph acts as an attendant and receives the gifts.

Fra Angelico has a picture in the National Gallery (582) in which Mary is seated at the entrance of a cave, and the richly attired kings kneel on the flowery earth at the Child's feet, while Joseph looks on in wonder. The sweet simplicity of the Mother and Child, and the awestruck kings, give a touching air of devout piety to the scene.

In Bonifazio's Adoration of the Kings (Accademia, Venice), the Child lifts the lid of the cup presented by the kneeling king with the action of a curious Child which is wholly at variance with the expression of the Magi themselves, and gives an excuse for the critical air of the negro king, who looks on in a sceptical manner.

'The Adoration of the Kings,' Filippo Lippi, Uffizi, Florence, shows a large landscape crowded



## THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI 125

with figures, in the midst of which sits Mary, sublime in her spiritual beauty, her fair face, with soft fair hair hanging around it, and celestial light hovering over. Her Child on her lap receives the homage of the aged and bearded king. Various richly clothed figures stand and kneel, and behind Joseph, who bends over the Mother and Child, is a curious group of half-clothed peasants who are apparently being harangued by a standing figure of superior position. Strings of horsemen, cities, mountains and trees make up a most elaborate composition.

Baldassare Peruzzi, in the National Gallery (218), has treated the subject in the same elaborate manner. More than fifty figures with elephants, horses and servants are introduced. The scene is a wild rocky landscape, and in the distance are the angels appearing to the shepherds, while above, the Almighty and His angels are in the sky. In the midst of such a great throng the Divine Child and His mother are rather insignificant figures, seated under a ruined arch, which the inquisitive gamins and riff-raff, attracted by the kingly procession, are trying to scale.

In Pinturicchio's dignified picture the three kings make their offerings at the same time as a shepherd bearing a lamb on his shoulder enters.

The beautiful Memling in S. John's Hospital,

Bruges, represents one of the Magi as a bald elderly man kissing the foot of the Child Jesus with a grave and beautiful devoutness. Behind him stands Joseph holding a fine golden cup. Another of the kings kneels on the opposite side holding a vase, and a negro king is entering and holding a covered chalice in his hand. The light radiates from Mary's head and behind her. Through the open stable is a view of a town.

Rogier van Weyden's picture in the Old Pinakothek in Munich is another good example of the magnificence of early Flemish work. Our Lady, with light radiating from her, holds her veil with one hand while with the other she supports her Child. She is seated in a ruined stable with a view of a beautiful old Flemish city seen through its arches. Joseph, hat in hand, stands near. One gorgeous king touches with his lips the Divine Child's hand, and the two others stand behind him; a group of peasants, who may be intended for the shepherds, look on through a doorway.

Rembrandt has used his wonderful powers of representing mysterious light and shadows in his picture in the queen's gallery, but his Virgin is a coarse Dutch peasant.

Rubens painted no less than fifteen pictures on this subject, and, in two of them, one in the Madrid Gallery and the other in the Duke of



THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI  
*From the painting by Memling in the Hospital of S. John, Bruges*



## THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI 127

Westminster's Gallery, he makes the mother stand and hold up her Child.

Mabuse has a beautiful picture in Lord Carlisle's collection, perhaps one of the best of the Flemish school. Ghirlandajo, Botticelli, Perugino, Francia, Raphael, and all the great Italian painters, have painted this subject, with almost as much diversity of treatment as the Annunciation. It was a special favourite with the Florentine and Venetian artists, for in it they could indulge in their love of colour and gorgeous accessories.

The only modern artist who has given a new rendering of this subject, as far as I am aware, is Burne-Jones.

'The Star of Bethlehem' is upheld in the hands of one of those straight sexless angels which seem to have originated in the Byzantine mosaics. Mary is seated beneath a thatched open porch, and all around her, though the season is winter, and bare trees are gaunt on the hills, the lilies and roses, sacred to her, blossom at her feet. Her lovely face, seen in profile, is intensely meek and pure. Joseph stands in bewilderment with a faggot under his arm. The three kings approach with bowed head and awe-struck faces, their gorgeous armour and rich robes in striking contrast to the simplicity of Mary's peasant dress and poverty-stricken surroundings.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PURIFICATION—THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

**W**E read in the gospel that Mary, when the days of her purification were accomplished, brought her Son to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, and to make the sacrifice for the first-born. In art, the two ceremonies, the Mother's Purification and the offering for the Son, are merged in the same picture, for both incidents culminate in the recognition by the aged Simeon of the Lord's Christ.

These forty days of ecstasy after the Divine Birth must surely have been the happiest and most unclouded of all Our Lady's life. With her return to the world she is greeted with the awful prophecy, 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.'

Simeon and Anna have been held to represent the Gentile and Jewish worlds. Simeon, who embraced Christ, typifying the Gentiles, while

Anna, who only prophesied great things of Him, but did not embrace Him, the Jewish world.

The offering for the first-born, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons, is borne either by an attendant or S. Joseph. The moment generally chosen by painters is the embrace of the Child by Simeon, though sometimes, as in an early Byzantine ivory, Mary holds the Child out towards him, and this treatment is followed by Francia and Carpaccio; but usually Mary stands veiled, and with arms held out towards her Child, her whole thought and being centred on Him. She can scarcely bear to part with Him even for the moment when Simeon embraces Him. Only for forty days has she held Him in unclouded happiness. With her voluntary offering of Him to His Father comes the first of her Seven Sorrows, the first piercing of the sword, which is followed in a few days by terror and flight and banishment.

The Gospel of the Infancy speaks of Simeon seeing the Christ shining as a Pillar of Light in His mother's arms, and his eyes beholding the guard of angels which surrounded the Mother and Child, as guards throng around their king.

This perpetual guardianship of the angels is portrayed in that very early and most elevated theological treatise wrought in mosaic on the arch

of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome. Nowhere else has this majestic and celestial guard been shown forth with such solemnity.

One of the most expressive and graceful figures Giotto ever painted is his figure of Mary standing with arms outstretched towards her Child (Assisi). The Child turns to look at her, and the sweet passion of maternal yearning dominates the picture. Giotto's treatment of the same subject in Padua is one of the few instances in which he strikes a wrong note, for the Child is drawing up His feet and striking out in baby terror at Simeon.

In Niccolo Pisano's bas-reliefs in Siena and Pisa, Mary is of the classical goddess type, cool, dignified, and matronly, with none of the wistful maternity such as Ambrogio Lorenzetti has so poignantly shown in his picture in Florence, where Mary holds the cloth with which the Child has been wrapped, and stands with her eyes fixed upon His face as he lies passive in Simeon's arms.

In Fra Filippo Lippi's picture the Child is placed on an altar, and Mary touches His fingers ; Simeon is vested as a bishop, and the whole effect is artificial and inadequate.

Francia and Carpaccio represent Mary as just holding her Child towards Simeon, and in Francia's picture she is an elegant and rather affected young lady.





THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE  
*From the fresco by Giotto di Bondone in the lower Church of S. Francesco, Assisi*



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Bartolommeo Montagna is unusual in representing both Mary and Simeon on their knees while she holds the Child to him.

Luini is almost alone in making his gracious and beautiful Mary stand with hands folded in the prayer of adoration, while the grave and noble old man holds the Christ tenderly in his veiled hands, and the eager, impassioned Anna almost clutches Mary in her eager cry of recognition. Behind Mary are two girls bearing doves, and S. Joseph is pointing the Child out to the women at the side. The whole is framed in a spacious temple with a vista of mountains seen through a wide arch.

It soon became the custom to invest Simeon in the garb of a priest, sometimes as a bishop, and the ceremony takes place in the interior of a church. Not infrequently in Flemish pictures a taper and holy water are carried, such as are used at a woman's churching in Catholic countries. Hence the name 'Candlemas Day' for this festival. In Jan van Eyck's fine picture in the Boisseree Gallery Joseph carries the taper. Very rich and beautiful are some of these Flemish pictures, with their wonderful Gothic interiors and the rich vestments.

Raphael has a fine picture in the Vatican of this subject, but it is marred by the Child's turn-

ing away with a gesture of fear ; an error of taste more deplorable than Fra Bartolommeo's making the huge child raise His hand in benediction, as in the picture in the National Gallery.

The slaughter of the Innocents, that strange and mysterious prelude to the cross, belongs properly to the life of Christ, and is not included in the usual series of the life of Our Lady. It sometimes is introduced into the background of pictures of the Flight into Egypt.

S. Matthew says that when the wise men were departed the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph saying, 'Arise, take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him.'

This hurried departure by night has not been seized upon as often as might have been expected by the artists who have painted the Flight. Sometimes an angel is introduced, who carries a torch or lantern ; sometimes Joseph carries the lantern ; but one of the few pictures of the stealthy start at night is by Burne-Jones, and shows Joseph placing Mary on the ass in the grey-blue light of earliest dawn.

The story of the stealing away of the Child before whom kings had so lately knelt, the long journey through strange lands to the country of mystery, idolatry, and witchcraft, Egypt of the

## THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT 133

ancient ages, was strange and romantic enough in itself without the aid of legend to enhance it. But from very early times legend clustered round the mysterious journey. The long, dangerous, robber-haunted way, some four hundred miles, to be undertaken by a delicately-reared temple maiden, a new-born child, and an elderly man, is in its essence mysterious. Tradition has held that the ox and the ass from Bethlehem accompanied them, but frequently the ox is omitted in art. There is a legend I have met with in Cornwall, and nowhere else, that the dark mark borne by the ass on his neck is a testimony of Mary having placed the Divine Child to sit thereon.

Joseph as the protector of the Divine Child and His mother occupied, especially in early Greek art, a very important place. He is sometimes shown carrying the Child in his arms, but the most usual treatment is for him to lead the ass on which Mary, holding the Child, is seated. Sometimes an angel leads the ass, and he follows, carrying a bundle. In a picture by Tiarini he holds the Child, while Mary mounts the ass, and Poussin makes Mary take the Child from his arms.

In the early pictures and sculptures attendants are almost invariably introduced. Tradition speaks of Salome as following the Holy Family into Egypt. Giotto introduces three attendants,

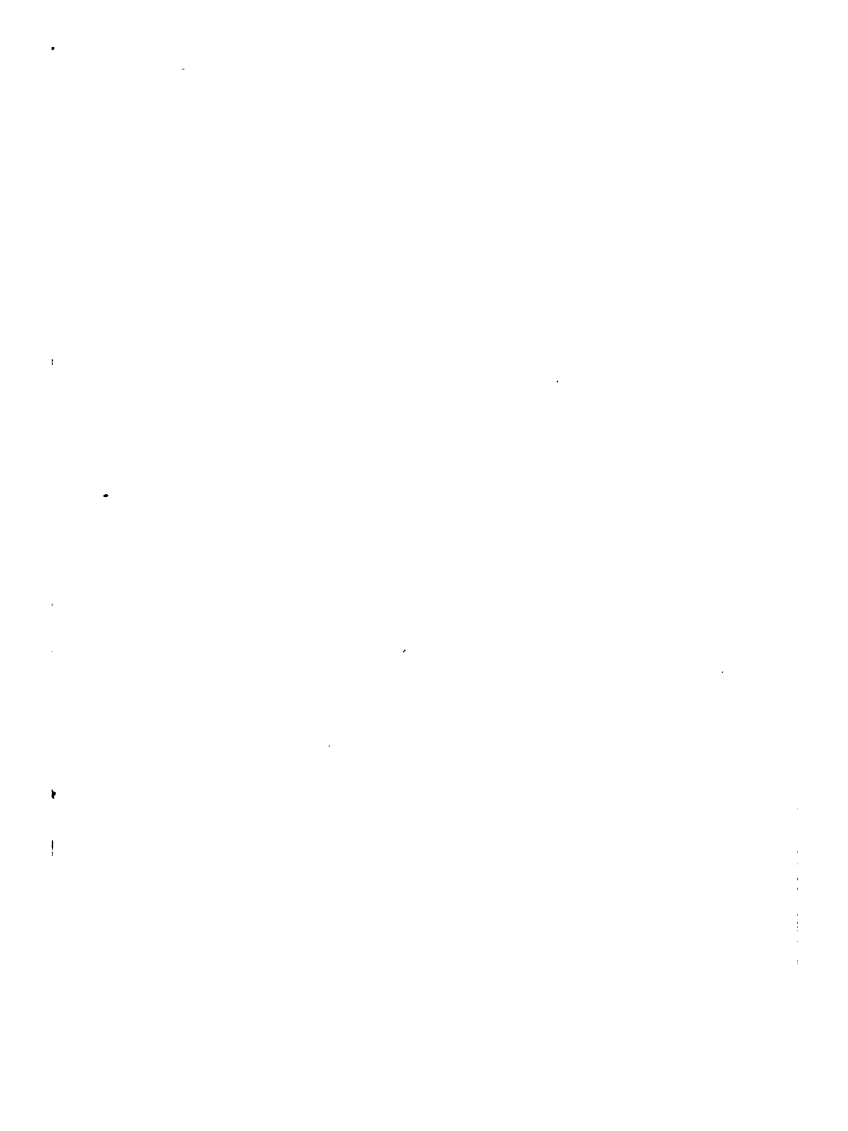
but Fra Angelico and Pinturicchio dispense with them. There are a few instances, notably a tenth-century ivory in the Louvre, where the Flight takes place on foot, but this is very unusual.

Incidents of the journey are frequently represented in the background, as in Pinturicchio's fine fresco in San Onofrio, where the Massacre of the Innocents is taking place in the distance.

Mary, full of patient weariness, is seated on the ass, and the Child stands on her knee; Joseph is pressing forward, and overhead the tall palm bends in an arch to the Infant Christ. For the trees, it is related, all bowed their heads to their Maker as He passed, all but the proud aspen, and the Lord Christ spoke to her, as in after days He spoke to the fig-tree, and at the sound of His reproof she trembled, and has quivered ever since at His words.

Mary, fearing the pursuit of Herod's soldiers, spoke to a labouring man who was sowing his field as they passed, and instructed him that if soldiers inquired if they had passed, he was to tell them it was when he was sowing his grain, and the wheat sprang up into ear, so the man, reaping at eventide what he had sown that morning, made answer as he was bade, and the soldiers turned back.

Hans Memling has a fine picture in the Munich





THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

*From the painting by Fra Angelico in the Academy, Florence*



## THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT 135

Gallery of this miraculous reaping, and it is frequently introduced into backgrounds.

Giotto, in his fresco at Padua, represents Our Lady as a grave and dignified figure, with an abstracted expression as of one whose eyes and thoughts are secure in God's guidance, and lifted above the distracting perils of the way. She is seated on the ass, and her Child lies on her breast. S. Joseph, who walks in front, turns his head back and has his eyes fixed on her as if walking by her guidance. An attendant holds the bridle, and three others follow. An angel hovers overhead and points the way to the Virgin. A mountainous background shows the wild nature of the country. The whole idea of the picture forcibly expresses that this was no common journey, no frightened escape from peril, but the following of a Divine guidance, a walking in the paths of the Lord. Few, even of Giotto's pictures, are more intensely religious and elevated in sentiment.

Fra Angelico illustrates the same idea, only more forcibly, for in his picture in the Accademia in Florence, the ass goes serenely on his way without bridle. Joseph, carrying the pilgrim basket and cloak, walks behind in serene confidence of heavenly guidance. Mary, with the tenderest gesture, holds her Babe to her face. Not even

an angel is necessary to express this confident following in the path of the Lord's will. It is one of the most serene and trustful expressions of absolute faith in the Divine Light that even Angelico painted.

It is supposed that the route was across the hilly country of Judea to Joppa, and then by the coast road. Josephus speaks of the hills being infested with robbers. A place is still pointed out near Ramla, where two robbers fell upon the little party, and one would have plundered them, but the other was touched by their plight, and not only persuaded his fellow to spare them, but guided them to their stronghold in the rocks and gave them shelter. So the Lord lay among thieves in His infancy as He died between them at the end. Mary spoke to the merciful robber, and told him that the Lord God would forgive him his sins, and receive him at His right hand; and it came to pass that the men were crucified with Christ, one on His right and the other on His left.

Another legend relates how all the idols of a great pagan city fell on their faces when the Holy Family came to it, and Mary and Joseph fled from thence in terror into the mountains to escape the wrath of the inhabitants.

Much more popular than the actual Flight are

## THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT 137

pictures of the haltings on the journey, commonly styled 'Riposo.'

After leaving the mountains it is related that the Holy Family came to a fertile and pleasant country with water and fruit trees, and Mary bathed her Child in the fountain and washed His clothes therein.

An enormous number of exquisite pictures have been painted of this repose in the journey, especially by German and Flemish artists. The homely details of the wanderers' camp in the wilderness have been most pathetically rendered by such an artist as Albrecht Altdorfer (Royal Museum, Berlin), where he shows Our Lady seated by a stone-enclosed fountain, while the Child leans over to splash in it, and tiny boy-angels, like little sprites, frolic in the water. Lucas Cranach has several beautiful 'Riposi.' In one Mary is seated under a tree with the Child on her lap, and a garland of child angels dance around her to amuse the Child. Unfortunately the sweetness of the scene is marred by two of the little angels robbing a bird's nest overhead, while the parent birds seem to shriek at them. The thoroughly Teutonic touch is rarely absent, even in such idyllic scenes as this.

More homely is Martin Schongauer's (Imperial Museum, Vienna), for he seats Our Lady in a

kitchen with a basket of grapes by her side. She is picking the berries off for her Child, who is intent on the process. Joseph is foddering down the ox and the ass in the background.

In a lovely little picture by Lucio Massari (Uffizi, Florence), Our Lady has been washing, and S. Joseph holds out the little clothes to dry.

Very charming and quaint is Velasco da Coimbra's picture in the National Museum, Lisbon. Mary, with a smiling face, warms her hand over a charcoal brazier, to which Joseph holds a piece of linen to warm for the infant. They are encamped amid wide ruined arches, which serve as halting places for groups of long-robed swallow-winged angels, who sing from scrolls and books, or humbly kneel and adore. The ox and ass and some peasants are in the background. The mixture of humble domestic details, the coffee jug, the brazier, a loaf, and the careful tending of the Child, with the charming little bird-like angels flitting about, makes a most idyllic picture.

One of the legends frequently illustrated is of the Virgin and Child seated beneath a palm-tree, which bowed its fruits into their hands, and then sprang back again, while from its roots flowed a fountain. Correggio illustrates the legend in his picture in Parma, where S. Joseph gathers the

## THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT 139

fruit, which he places in the Child's hand, while Mary dips the water from the stream.

Correggio's sportive gaiety, his sense of irresponsibility and naïve artlessness, render him a peculiarly suitable painter for these charming scenes. He has another of the same incident in the Uffizi, which is less graceful, less vivacious, and has an incongruous touch, in the person of S. Francis, who kneels on one side.

Better known than these two pictures is his Adoration of the Infant Christ by His mother. The Child lies on a little straw on the corner of His mother's mantle, on the step of a ruined pagan temple. A saddle lies on the ground, and in the distance is a landscape with ruins and palm-trees. Mary, with uplifted hands, kneels before Him, with all that tender, fond adoration of motherly delight which can so easily degenerate into foolishness, but in this instance is ecstatic rapture.

The sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt was supposed to have lasted about seven years, but painters have not always followed this idea. Francesco Vanni has a picture of the return, in which Christ is a boy of about three.

Joseph, hearing that Archelaus, the son of Herod, reigned in Judea, was afraid to go thither, and being warned of God in a dream, he turned

aside into Galilee, and came to Nazareth, which was the home of the Virgin. Here in peace, among the people who had known her father and mother, did Mary dwell, bringing up her Child, treasuring up in her heart the mysteries and wonders connected with Him.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE HOME AT NAZARETH—THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE—THE MIRACLE OF CANA

THE life of Christ and His mother in the little home at Nazareth was a subject that appealed far more to the medieval mind than it does to the modern. Work was in itself sanctified by the carpenter Boy, and the domestic virtues were hallowed, and even made popular, by Mary's motherhood. Illuminations, carvings, and cheap prints showing Christ at His mother's knee, or assisting His foster-father in his workshop, abounded, though there are curiously few pictures of the Hidden Life by the great artists. Possibly the Divine significance of the Babe of Bethlehem with His mother was so great that it was never exhausted. It was in the *popular* art of the middle ages, the stained windows and sculptures of the churches, and later the cheap woodcuts, in which the homely details of the life at Nazareth were depicted.

It is curious that at the present day, when 'Labour' is a political force, that the sanctification of labour is apparently the only aspect of the question which does not occur to anybody.

In the middle ages the carpenter's shop at Nazareth was held to have sanctified the life of the working man and woman. We see in the numerous guilds of the time the feeling that all labour was hallowed and ennobled by the life of the Son of God, the modern view that it is a curse and a disgrace had not come into sight.

There is a set of twelve prints with descriptive Latin verses which seem to have been very popular, entitled 'Jesu Christi Dei Domini Salvatoris nostri Infantia,' and which represent very well the minute and loving feeling for Christ and His mother.

1. The Divine Son in glory surrounded by cherubim.
2. The Virgin on the hill of Sion (typifying the Church). The Divine Child on her lap listening to the choirs of angels.
3. The Child rocked to sleep by angels while His mother sews beside Him.
4. Joseph working in his carpenter's shop. Mary is measuring linen while her mother looks on. The Divine Child is playing with two angels, and blowing soap bubbles.





THE HOME AT NAZARETH  
*From an engraving by Albert Dürer*

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## THE HOME AT NAZARETH 143

5. Mary cooking the food. Joseph chopping wood. The Child sweeping up the chips.

6. Mary reeling a skein. Joseph carpentering. The Child assisted by angels gathering chips.

7. Mary spinning with a wheel. Joseph sawing, the Child helping him.

8. Mary spinning with a distaff. Joseph and the Child working.

9. Joseph building a house. The Child working with a gimlet, angels helping. Mary winding thread.

10. Joseph roofing the house. Mary carding. The Child carrying a beam.

11. Joseph building a boat. The Child helping him. Mary knitting a stocking.

12. Joseph making a fence. The Child fastening the palings. Mary making garlands.

The contemplation of pictures of this sort doubtless helped to make working people realise the dignity and beauty of labour. The sheer delight in beautiful work so evident in the buildings and utensils that have come down to us from medieval times must have been greatly fostered by the constantly present idea of the industrious little home at Nazareth.

Christ in the home of His parents is admirably portrayed in the well-known picture by Millais. Joseph bending over his carpenter's bench holds

out the palm of the Child with a wound cut from a tool in it, while His mother in an agony of tenderness sinks on her knees beside Him. S. John bears a vessel of water to bathe the hurt, and two workmen look on with grave sympathy. But for the strained and half-hysterical attitude of the Blessed Virgin, which is wholly at variance with all the traditions of her character, and is an entirely nineteenth-century conception of Mary, and the unnecessary, rather stupid ugliness of the Child's face, the picture would have been not only beautiful but far more convincing.

The one glimpse which is afforded us in the gospels of the life of Mary at Nazareth relates that it was the custom for Joseph and Mary to go to Jerusalem every year to keep the Feast of the Passover. At the age of twelve Jesus was eligible to be admitted to the full privileges of the *Bar mitzvah* (Son of the Covenant), and thus for the first time could partake of all the privileges of Israel. His first act on attaining His legal majority is to proclaim His Divine Mission.

The Gospel of S. Luke, the early chapters of which are supposed to have been dictated by the lips of Mary, relates how the Child stayed behind, and how for three days Mary and Joseph sought him sorrowing.

One of the most subtle piercings of His

## THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE 145

mother's anguish must have been in the fact that she did not anticipate His action, nor realise that the beloved Child had passed from the need of her protective care to the use of His own individuality.

It seems as if the Mother followed the Divine Son in participation in every form of mortal anguish, and here we see Mary the sinless, bereft of Christ and seeking Him, as the sinner seeks Him, in the bitterness of desolation, and only finding Him in the Temple.

All the early pictures are occupied with this view of the Mother's anguish, an anguish so great that its relief is counted as one of the Seven Joys of Mary. Simone Memmi expresses it more keenly than most artists when he makes Mary sink upon the ground and search in the Book of Wisdom for some light to guide her. As she seeks she looks up, and the Divine Child is before her, with arms folded across His bosom. S. Joseph with a face full of affectionate expostulation bends over them, and lays one hand on His shoulder as with the other he points to His mother.

Pintoricchio admirably expresses the exhaustion of her prolonged anguish by making her cling to Joseph's belt to sustain her in the sudden relief of catching sight of Christ among the Doctors, as

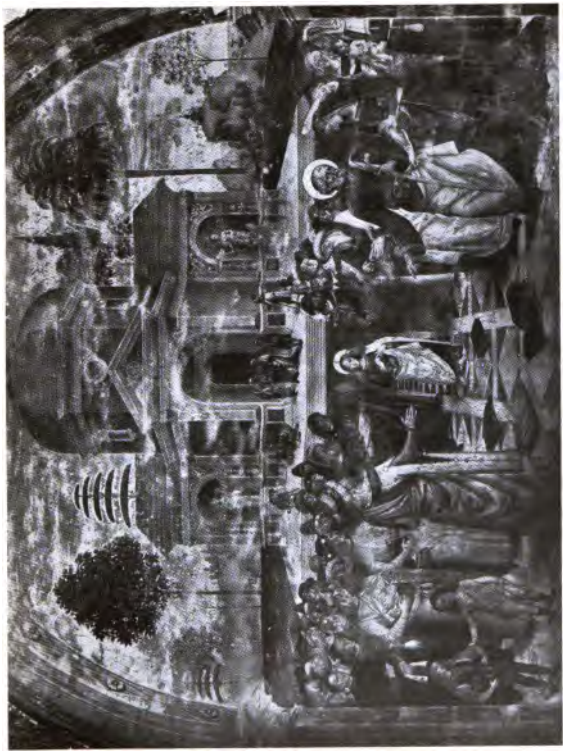
they enter the precincts of the Temple. Giotto (Accademia, Venice) shows Mary in the foreground just entering, and holding out her hands to Christ, who is seated on a high seat. Luini (Saronna) has much the same idea. Mary has one foot on the step of the throne, while with one hand on her heart she holds out the other towards Christ, who, rising from His seat, points upward as He says, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

The more general treatment is to show Mary and Joseph entering at the side of the Temple.

Holman Hunt shows the interior of the Temple. A circle of wonderful rabbis, white haired and fierce-eyed, sit disconcerted and glowering at the wistful-eyed lad who is snatched to His mother's breast. The figure of Our Lady in its loose draperies and her stooping attitude is graceful and beautiful, but the face with the veil drawn back leaves much to be desired.

Albert Dürer, in his life of the Virgin, has adopted a doctrinal rather than a historical standpoint, and places the Christ in a high seat as one having authority to teach, while Mary stands in an attitude of expostulation.

There is an interesting picture by Rubens, painted for the Jesuit College at Antwerp, representing the Return of Christ with His parents.



THE FINDING OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE  
*From the fresco by Pintoricchio in the Church of S. Maria Maggiore, Spello*





## THE MIRACLE OF CANA 147

He is walking between them to the obscurity of the little home in Nazareth, and it is an illustration of the text, 'And He was subject unto them.'

Not even legend has cast a light upon the following years of Our Lady's life. He dwelt with her, and that was enough.

The death of Joseph is supposed to have occurred between Christ's twelfth and thirtieth year. There is an Arabic life of Joseph, of very early date, which relates how Mary and her Son watched and tended the old man, and much pious thought has hovered round that ideal deathbed, so that in the middle ages S. Joseph became a patron of deathbeds. The invocation 'Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, be near me when I die,' is still breathed daily by thousands. There are a few pictures of Joseph's death, but it was never a common subject in art.

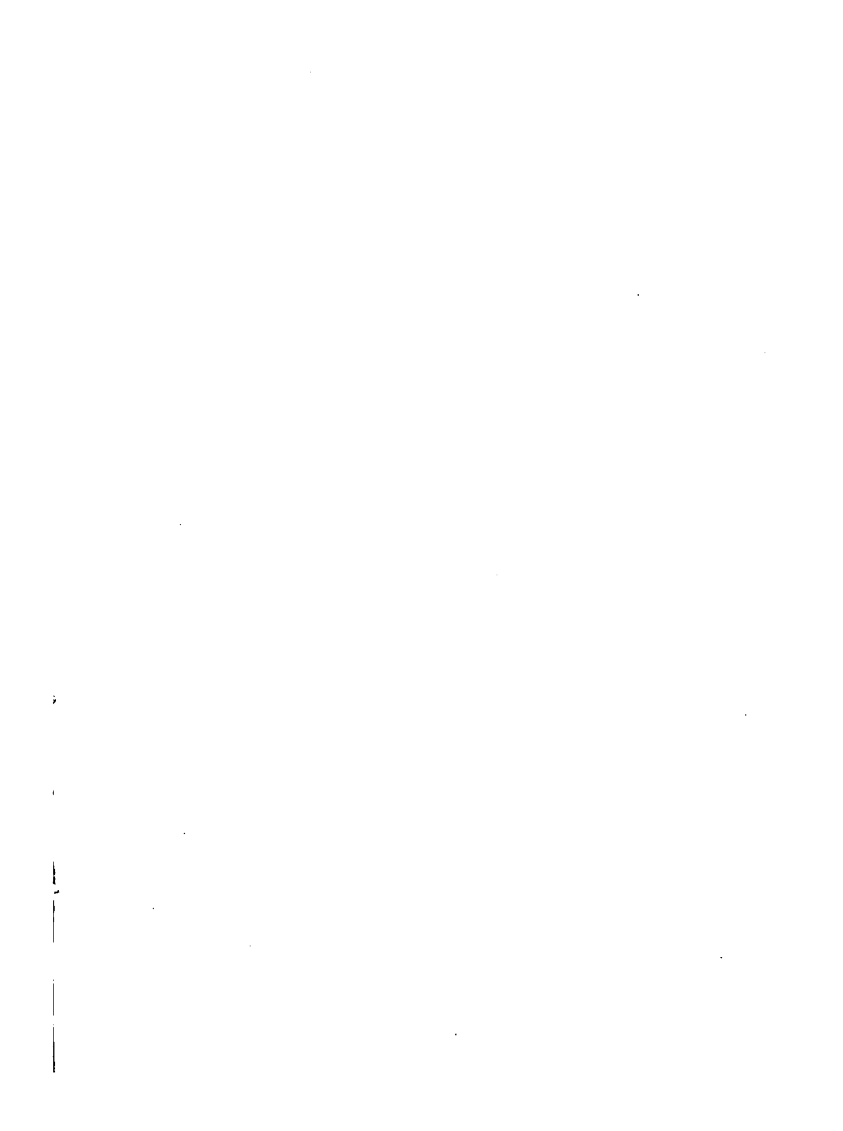
History is silent with regard to Mary until she appears as the instigator of her Son's first miracle. Her sympathetic consideration for the feelings of the poor couple who had not been able to provide wine enough for the use of their guests led her to point out their deficiency to her Son. From her manner of calling His attention, it is obvious she must have been aware that He *could* remedy the deficiency, or there would have been no

point in calling attention to the fact. His answer, 'Woman, what is that to Me and to thee,' also implies a tender union and understanding between those two exalted natures. He had evidently not intended to begin his miraculous ministry yet, but at His mother's request He worked His first miracle.

There is a Greek tradition that it was at the marriage of S. John that the first miracle took place, but it does not seem to have obtained in Western art; and there is another tradition that it was at the marriage of Simon the Canaanite.

Giotto's treatment, as usual, is full of sweet significance and tender religious feeling, but it is contrary to the usual arrangement, in that it seats Our Lord and Our Lady at opposite ends of the table. It is more in accordance with the spirit of the text to represent them seated next each other, when her gentle whisper could reach Him unheard by others.

Luini has a fresco in the Church of San Maurizio at Milan, which was painted for some nuns, and bears a mystic reference to a Divine Sposalizio most appropriate to its locality. The bride is represented as a nun about to make her profession. The Blessed Virgin and her Son are seated together and are conversing. The treatment is simple and beautiful, and a contrast to





**THE MARRIAGE FEAST AT CANA**

*From the painting by Paolo Veronese in the Royal Gallery, Dresden*

## THE MIRACLE OF CANA 149

the gorgeous Venetian pictures which represent such wealthy interiors that a call of the Mother of God to the servants for more wine would be regarded as an impertinence. The whole point of the story lies in the sweet thoughtfulness of the guest for the poor hosts, whose all was not enough.

As a suitable subject for monastic refectories, the miracle in Cana was very popular in the great days of Italian art. Paolo Veronese has a great picture, now in the Dresden Gallery. There the artist has represented the moment when the ruler of the feast, holding up the wine, exclaims, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

There is another fine decorative picture by Paolo Veronese in the Louvre. It represents an immense banquet being held in a marble palace; the guests are most sumptuously clad, the servants are numerous, and spectators line the balconies. All that was most magnificent in the most decorative age of the world has gone to make up this magnificent scene. By dint of careful examination the heads of Christ and His mother may be discerned among the numerous guests. They are seated side by side in the middle of the table, and look rather bored by their surroundings; an attendant pushes her hand in between them.

Among the women who ministered to our Lord during His three years' ministry, we find in the gospels no direct mention of Our Lady except once, where our Lord uses her desire to come to Him as an illustration of His love for us.

There is a carving on one of the stalls at Amiens representing this incident, but I have never seen it in any picture. That she who bore Him, and loved Him beyond all other creatures, should not have followed and ministered to Him with the other women is incredible. Not even to a wife will a mother willingly transfer all the sacred servitude of motherhood. Between Christ and His mother theologians have always held that there existed that closest of all relations, a true spiritual communion. This idea is most beautifully exemplified in Fra Angelico's 'First Eucharist' in the cloisters of S. Mark in Florence. The table extends, as in a convent refectory, round the three walls of the chamber. Christ bearing his chalice and the sacred Host walks round the inner side, administering to each of the reverent disciples in turn. At the end of the table kneels the Blessed Virgin, present in spirit. She is introduced in much the same manner in his picture of the Transfiguration in San Marco. The grand and simple figure of the Christ, with His arms outstretched in the form of

## THE MIRACLE OF CANA 151

a cross, is in the middle. Below are the three disciples, dazed and awed by the splendour. Under the outstretched arms, Moses and Elias look out of the mist that surrounds His glory, and below them, present in spirit, is the humble, kneeling figure of Our Lady.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CALVARY

**I**N the historical series of the life of Our Lady, the next event depicted by artists is the Passion of Christ, beginning with His farewell to His mother.

There is no very early instance of this subject. It seems to have been evolved out of the devotion of the middle ages, when it was felt that so tender a Son would not exclude His mother from the farewell which He took of His disciples, but it was never a popular subject in art.

Albert Dürer represents Mary as overcome by anguish and sinking to the earth. In Carotto's picture Christ kneels before His mother to receive her blessing. Lorenzo Lotto and Paolo Veronese have both painted this subject. Correggio gives the most dramatic rendering. Christ, robed in white, with His arms folded across His breast, kneels to receive His mother's



blessing. Overcome by her anguish, Mary is sinking to the ground, but is upheld by the arms of S. Mary Magdalen. Mary's long beautiful hands fall over the Magdalen's arms. The moonlight suffuses the scene with a misty radiance, and one cannot suppress the feeling that its light falling on Christ's gown was of more interest to the painter than the expression of Mary's breaking heart, or Christ's dutifulness. Apart from its somewhat hysterical emotion, it remains an intensely dramatic and exquisite rendering of a highly emotional subject.

The next scene is one which is included in the Devotion known as the 'Way of the Cross,' and which occurs in a very early tradition, which speaks of the Mother meeting the Divine Son on His terrible Via Dolorosa.

There is a spot near the summit of the hill of Calvary which is pointed to as the 'hollow place between the cliffs' where the Mother, and the women her companions, met the Cross-bearing Christ. It seems exceedingly probable that Mary spent the night of the Passover with Christ's great friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, at Bethany. So solemn a night would be duly observed, and there has never been any reason to suppose that Christ permitted His tender Mother to be an eye-witness of His terrible degradation

and suffering on the night of His passion. That she was with Him in His death was her right and privilege. That some one acquainted her with the awful tragedy of Holy Thursday night, and she rushed to meet Him, with her devoted friends, and met Him bearing His cross, is what probably happened.

In commemoration of her extreme affliction, there is a scene in the Stations of the Cross, entitled, in French, *Notre Dame du Spasme*, or *du Pâmoison*, and in Italian, *La Madonna dello Spasimo*, or *Il pianto di Maria*. It has been a favourite subject with painters. The sinking to the earth of the afflicted Mother is the most usual rendering; in a few pictures she is merely one of the figures in the crowd. Sometimes she is sustained by women; at others she stands mute with clasped hands. Giotto, with his customary dislike of wild action, makes her stand on one side, her head turned and her eyes fixed on her Son, while a soldier rudely pushes her away. The same feeling of the brutality of the soldiers is more coarsely shown in a picture of Gaudenzio Ferrari, where one of them lifts up a stick as if to strike her, which is in needlessly bad taste. Murillo has a fine picture of her sitting on the wayside gazing with intense anguish at her Son, but the best known of all pictures on



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

*From the painting by Gaudenzio Ferrari in the Church of the Madonna  
delle Grazie, Varallo*



this theme is Raphael's, 'Lo Spasimo di Sicilia,' which he painted for the high altar of the Sicilian Olivetans at Palermo. Christ is represented as having fallen on His knees under the cross. His Mother has sunk beside Him, and stretches out her arms in an agony towards Him. S. John and the women support her. The grouping of the women and the coarse apathy of the soldiers are finely rendered.

Martin Schoen, from whom Raphael is known to have borrowed his idea, shows the group of women in the background crowding in the 'hollow way' between the cliffs.

Lucas van Leyden shows the procession to Calvary in the far distance, and in the foreground Mary, beholding her Son, is supported in her agony by S. John.

The three Maries, Mary Magdalen, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary the mother of SS. James and John, and sometimes Martha the sister of Lazarus, are usually represented as attending the Mother.

The fifth and greatest of the Seven Sorrows is the crucifixion. This subject which belongs to the life of Christ, is not included in the life of the Virgin in art, but only in the series of the Seven Sorrows, and it is only her part in it which is the theme of this chapter. We read in the gospel

that there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and in early art it is thus that she is invariably represented, viz. *standing*. Sometimes in Byzantine work she draws her mantle before her face, the recognised attitude expressive of sorrow, but she invariably *stands*, a dignified mourning figure. With the exception of the Crucifixion on the doors of S. Sabina, Mary and John are always present in fourth, fifth, and sixth century Crucifixions.

In the fourth century ivory in the British Museum, Mary stands beside the cross, and this is her invariable attitude in the numerous ivories, illuminations, frescoes, mosaics, and pictures, until the seventh century.

In the Syrian Bible of the monk Rabula, of the sixth century, she stands, a meek veiled figure. In a tenth century ivory in Florence she holds her mantle before her face; in a twelfth century mosaic in San Clemente, Rome, she holds her hands in prayer in the attitude of the Oranti in the Catacombs.

In all early pictures and sculptures Mary is an important figure in the scene of the Crucifixion. For many ages she stood at the foot of the cross as the personification of the Church mourning for her Beloved, but steadfast and upheld by His love. In later art her symbolical and traditional

aspect is lost sight of and she becomes merely the suffering human mother who sinks mourning to the earth, overcome by her affliction.

There is a remarkable and interesting' Crucifixion over the altar of the little village church of Innichen in the Pustherthal in Tyrol, which I have never seen alluded to in any book on art; yet it is one of the most important examples of eighth-century Byzantine art in existence. Its record is a good one. The name of the donor, Duke Totilo, who brought it from the East, is preserved, and it has been known to have been in its present site beyond the memory of man, and unless it was made within the last few years it could not have so accurately represented the art of that period, for the skill of archaeological artists had not reached such a point of knowledge between its alleged date and very recent times.

The figures are nearly life size, carved in wood. Christ is clothed in a long robe, the feet are apart and nailed on a projecting piece of wood. On either side stand respectively His Mother and S. John.

A change of attitude occurs when we come to the Renaissance, where, for the first time, we see Mary swooning in the arms of her attendants, as in Niccolo Pisano's work, and Duccio's most touching picture, both in Siena.

There is an old legend which speaks of Mary enduring the fearful agony of witnessing Christ's sufferings with heroic patience and fortitude, and in *silence*, not to add to her Son's suffering. Judging from the recorded words of Christ to His mother when on the cross, she must have been close to Him. It is only when the soldier pierced His side and His beloved body was desecrated in His death, that the legend says she swooned away, and a miracle kept her heart from breaking.

When the Crucifixion is treated historically these are the proper and historical attitudes for the Virgin. As long as her fortitude could help to sustain her Son she suffers in silence. At His death she follows Him into unconsciousness. In the devotional and mystical treatments Mary may quite properly be represented as swooning beneath the cross, or, as in Angelico's lovely little mystical Crucifixion in Florence, Mary and John are seated beneath the cross ; but the more usual treatment in the mystical pictures is to represent Mary as standing in this scriptural attitude, though Angelico in his grand theological Crucifixion in Florence represents her as just sinking into the arms of the women—at that moment overcome. Her meek veiled head is inexpressibly beautiful and her attitude full of sublime pathos.



Very exquisite and tender are Giotto's and Duccio's highly devotional pictures. The attendant women bend over the martyred Mother, and in Duccio's one almost hears their wail. For intensity of poignant grief Duccio's women, in his pictures of the Passion, can scarcely be excelled. They touch the highest note of human anguish.

In Duccio's Crucifixion at Siena, Mary sinks back with her eyes fixed on her Son as she falls into unconsciousness at the sight of His riven side.

Mantegna in his picture in the Louvre has a most beautiful group of women bending over the prostrate Mother of God, and in another of his pictures Mary is just sinking into the women's arms while they gaze on Christ.

Tintoretto adheres to the scriptural description, and the Maries are under Christ's feet, but they are barely distinguishable in the crowd. Contemporary with these crowded compositions we get wholly different ideas represented by such artists as Pietro Perugino.

We are all familiar with his beautifully poised, graceful figure of Mary standing in quiet anguish beneath the Christ who is eternally hanging between heaven and earth. It is the Mary of the Catacombs re-born in the fifteenth century,

the woman who represents the Church, the Bride of Christ.

With the growing desire to represent the Crucifixion as primarily an historical event rather than a spiritual eternity, the group of the Virgin Mother, the faithful apostle, and the sorrowing friends is pushed out of sight by rude soldiery and gaping crowds. It is a great spectacular drama, and the mystical meaning is lost sight of in horsemen and soldiers. In Paolo Veronese's picture in the Uffizi the women and S. John are pressed quite away in a corner, and the foot of the cross is occupied by a rabble of soldiery.

Before the Reformation the 'Rood, with Mary and John,' stood over the chancel screen of every church in England. A number of Catholic churches keep up the old custom. The finest modern example I am acquainted with is in the Catholic Church in Watford, where the faces and figures are full of beauty and pathos, modern, with the best modernity of good modelling and free from sentimentalism. The old symbolism of Mary as the personified Church is kept up in these Roods, still common on the continent.

One of the best known of all the ancient Latin sequences is Jacopone da Todi's 'Stabat Mater Dolorosa,' commemorative of the Mother's affliction as she stands beneath the cross of Christ.





THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

*From the painting by Ugolino da Siena in the possession of H. Wagner. Fig.*

On the same theme are the numerous Greek 'troparia,' called 'Stavrotheotokia' (from *σταυρός*, the cross, and *Θεοτόκος*, Mother of God), which are used on Wednesdays and Fridays in the ferial office of the Eastern Church.

According to the old Greek formula the Mother of Christ should stand at the deposition from the cross. An old legend says that when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took down the body of the Lord, S. John took the nails as they wrenched them out and put them by secretly, that His mother should not see them. And when the nails were dragged forth the body of the Redeemer hung over the shoulders of Nicodemus, and His mother took the arms she had so often felt about her neck, and drew them to her once more and kissed Him tenderly; and then she sank moaning to the earth. This beautiful and touching idea is most beautifully expressed in one of Duccio di Siena's pictures, where Nicodemus on the ladder supports the drooping Christ with his arm, as S. John receives the weight of the body, and Mary hangs the helpless arms over her shoulder and with tender hands holds the dead face to her lips. Behind her are the veiled and weeping women.

Nicolo Pisano has conveyed the same idea in his sculpture at Lucca. This touching incident

has been represented by many of the early Italian artists, and in this they show, to my thinking, far finer insight into what a heroic and devoted woman would feel and do, than do those later artists, who represent her as so absorbed in her own grief as to leave the last offices of her Beloved to be performed by others. The shrieking, selfish, hysterical woman who writhes in her passion and tears her hair, is not the Gospel idea of Mary.

There are certain pictures of the Deposition of the Cross which are too horrible to contemplate, for the body of Christ is in the act of falling, usually on His fainting mother. Raphael and Rubens are the most glaring instances of this atrocity. Perugino has one of his worst pictures on this theme. Signorelli prostrates Mary at the foot of the cross. None of the later artists approach the true dignity and pathos of Duccio's or Pisano's treatment of the subject.

Fra Angelico shows Christ's body straight and stiff in death at the foot of the cross, while His mother holds His head, Mary Magdalen His feet. A devout group of men and women kneel in adoring sorrow around Him.

In Perugino's beautiful picture in the Pitti the Mother holds Christ's arm and takes her last look at His face, ere the linen cloth is wound



**THE ENTOMBMENT**

*From the painting by Pietro Perugino in the Pitti Gallery, Florence*





around Him. The wide and peaceful landscape shimmering in the afternoon sun sheds a glow of beauty and peace over the scene, and robs death of all horror.

The laying of the dead Christ in the tomb is usually treated in a simple historical manner. The earlier Italian artists often let His mother's arms be the last to encircle His head as He is laid in a marble sarcophagus. In no instance can I recall in the earlier pictures the carrying into the cave. One reason for the popularity of the subject is that it was often painted as a votive offering on the death of a relative or friend, and so is frequently presented more from the point of view of Mary's bereavement than as an historical event.

In many cases Mary gives a last kiss as her arms lay Him in the tomb. Giotto in his fresco in Assisi shows this, and there are two instances of the same treatment ascribed to Giotto. Far less beautiful is Raphael's idea of the Virgin Mother sinking into a faint while the lusty disciples bear the helpless body with what looks like unnecessary violence, and S. John rushes to take the last embrace.

Tintoretto's Mary swooning in the arms of two women, as Christ is being borne from her embrace to be laid in the tomb, is one of the most beautiful

of all these dolorous figures. A deep sunset sky shows the crosses against the darkening night. As a rule the composition of Tintoretto's pictures does not permit of isolated groups being cut out of them, but this is an exception, as the little group of Maries are behind the figures in the foreground who are lowering the dead Christ into a tomb.

The statement in the gospels that S. John took the bereaved Mother to his own home implies that during His ministry Our Lady's home had been wherever her Son's was, and that at His death she would have been homeless, but for His bequeathing her to His favourite disciple. Very few artists have represented this most tragic homecoming. Zurbaran has a fine picture of the two sad and silent figures walking slowly away from the tomb, and there is an inexpressibly touching picture of the same subject in the Old Pinakothek in Munich.



THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS  
*From the painting by Tintoretto in the Pitti Gallery, Florence*



## CHAPTER XV

### THE RESURRECTION—THE ASCENSION—THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

**S.** AMBROSE in the fourth century mentions an early Christian tradition that Christ appeared in a flash of glory to His mother before He showed Himself in the garden to Mary Magdalen on the first Easter morning. The Gospel says nothing of such a meeting, but neither does it describe His appearance to S. Peter, which we only hear of in the Acts of the Apostles (xxiv. 34).

There is a beautiful old Italian version of the legend which describes Mary, who has kept all His sayings in her heart, waiting in her chamber for the fulfilment of His promise, 'after three days I will rise again.' While she waited, longing and praying, came angels who knelt before her and sang,

‘ Regina Caeli laetare, Alleluia !  
Quia quem meruisti portare, Alleluia !  
Resurrexit sicut dixit, Alleluia !’

which words with the added line

‘ Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia !’

are sung after Compline and said instead of the Angelus by the Catholic Church during Paschal time. While the angels sang, Christ, clothed in the white garment of victory, stood in His risen glory before the mother who bore Him. And she worshipped Him, and thanked Him meekly that He had deigned to make her the instrument of His redemption. And then He passed from Mary the sinless, to Mary the sinner, in the garden.

One of the finest scenes in the Cornish fifteenth century miracle play *Resurrectio Domini* represents this subject, and makes our Lord greet His mother with *Salve Sancta Parens*, the opening words of the verses of Sedulius, which form the introit of the Mass of Our Lady during a great part of the year.

There is a carving on one of the stalls of Amiens which is one of the earliest examples met with in art of this appearance of Christ to His mother. Albert Dürer has included it in his series of the Passion of Christ. There the angels

are omitted. Mary is kneeling at a desk with an open book before her, her hands raised in prayer. Christ, bearing the standard, stands before her in a blaze of light, His hand uplifted in benediction. Its simplicity and deep religious tone make it a beautiful and pathetic little picture. In a picture by Guercino in the Cathedral at Cento, Christ looks at His kneeling mother with an expression of deep sadness as if He had not forgotten, any more than she had, the last three days of unutterable anguish. This is a modern gloss on the old legend which is so triumphant and joyous.

The most beautiful rendering of this subject is by Filippino Lippi in the Old Pinakothek in Munich. Mary is kneeling in a meadow with a wide landscape around her, typical of the isolation of the soul set alone in the world of Nature. She is looking with an imploring expression in her sad and aged face at her Son, while she presses her hand above her stricken heart, with the same gesture that His hand is laid on His pierced side. It is the typical Mother, the Christian Church, pleading with Her Son, for those other children given to her at the foot of the cross.

There is a very curious picture of Christ appearing to the holy women by Frey-Carlos (1530), in the National Museum, Lisbon,—Portuguese school. Christ stands in the cloisters of a

church wearing a rich robe, and bearing a crystal and gold processional cross. His mother with uplifted hands listens to His voice. Outside the wall of the building the Maries stand, one holding a pot and the other looking through the narrow window; a very curious treatment of an unusual subject.

Guido has a fine picture in the Dresden Gallery where he introduces Adam and Eve following Christ, and there is a little picture in the Liechtenstein Gallery in which Christ is pointing out to His mother the prophecy regarding Him in the book before her. So tender and beautiful a subject is curiously rare in art; it appears to have been more popular in the Bologna school of art than elsewhere.

Except in this special manner Mary does not appear in pictures of the Resurrection of Christ.

In representations of the Ascension, she invariably occupies, in early art, the most important position on the earth. In the earliest examples she stands in the middle of the apostles, her hands uplifted in prayer. In one of the earliest known pictures of the Ascension, the Codex of the Monk Rabula (sixth century), she stands in the centre. The angels on each side are pointing out the ascending Christ to the apostles.

In several early ivories the same treatment is





THE ASCENSION

*From the painting by Andrea Mantegna in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence*



followed, but frequently the angels are alone in the heavens, and the Christ has ascended.

Giotto in his Paduan picture (Scrovegno Chapel) adheres to the old treatment in placing Mary at the centre of the picture. But both he and Fra Angelico represent Mary and the apostles as kneeling. There are few more deeply religious and spiritualised pictures than this of Giotto's. The whole emotion of those on earth is solemn, rapturous worship. There is no thought of self-consciousness; every sentiment is merged in adoration. Christ seen in profile is ascending in the same state of rapturous adoration, for He is going to His beloved Father, and the Angelic Hosts who half appear in the mysterious ether are as entirely lost in worship as the men and women below. It is far more satisfactory than Giotto's other picture in the Pitti, where he shows Christ extending His arms in blessing, and casting a lingering look on His followers, two of whom are whispering together; for the Paduan picture is a real illustration of the union of the Church on earth with Christ in heaven in the love of the one Father of both.

Fra Angelico has a simple circle of kneeling apostles and Mary, who are all devoutly gazing heavenward, while an angel stands beside them, but they can pay no heed to him yet.

Mantegna in his picture in the Uffizi has an exquisite figure of Mary with uplifted hands standing and gazing upwards. She is a sad and elderly woman lifted above the world by her sorrow and her love. It is one of the latest renderings of the 'Orante' of the Catacombs; it has the same attitude, the same sentiment, but is invested with all Mantegna's peculiar qualities of art.

The presence of Mary at the descent of the Holy Ghost is gathered from the words of Acts i. 14, and ii. 1. Strictly speaking, theologically, Mary having already received the Holy Ghost was not in the same need of Him as the apostles who needed His enlightenment, but it was as the 'Comforter' that the most sorrowful of women needed the Healer.

In early representations of the descent of the Holy Spirit Mary occupies the principal place. She stands in the midst of the apostles, and in one of the earliest instances, that of the Codex of Rabula, the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove hovers over her head alone, though on her and the apostles there flames the sacred fire.

Both Fra Angelico and Taddeo have adopted a curious historical method, for they represent the Blessed Virgin and the apostles as inside an upper storied house, showing only the half-length



**THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST**

*From the codex of the Monk Rabula in the Laurentian Library, Florence*



## DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST 171

figures, while an inquisitive crowd peer in from the street outside.

Giotto does not introduce Our Lady into his picture in Padua. Donatello shows her meekly kneeling surrounded by the rapturous apostles.

Paris Bordone goes to the extreme opposite of the old sober traditional representations, when he shows the Blessed Virgin seated on a sort of throne, from which she is half springing in a state of ecstasy, while the apostles, equally startled, are around in various attitudes of surprise.

After the descent of the Holy Ghost, the life of Our Lady is shrouded in mystery. Legend speaks of her as living for eleven years after the crucifixion. There is a tradition that she accompanied S. John the Divine to Ephesus about the time of the first persecution in Jerusalem, and the site of her house there has been regarded as a holy place from very early ages. This has an air of probability about it, as they were neither of them persons to forget or disobey their Lord's dying command to them. As a loving son S. John must have endeavoured to serve and tend the most precious legacy his Lord could leave him.

A tradition speaks of the apostles before their separation taking a solemn leave of their Master's mother, and asking her blessing, but it has only very rarely been represented in art. In

S. Giustina at Padua there is a picture by Bissoni of this incident, and there is a picture in Cologne.

The Carmelites have a legend that Our Lady lived on Mount Carmel for a time, in an oratory of the Prophet Elijah's, and they give her the title of 'La Madonna del Carmine.'

According to another legend current in very early days, Mary spent many of her days in visiting the scenes consecrated by the life and death of her Son. To a woman it seems as if this legend *must* be true, for it is true to woman's nature. No artist with whose works I am acquainted has represented this mother's pilgrimage, except Tissot, who has a most tender little drawing of Mary, silent, aged and alone, kneeling in contemplation by the riven rock on Mount Calvary, from which once rose the tree which bore the flower of humanity.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE DEATH OF OUR LADY AND HER ASSUMPTION

THE very early legend which speaks of Mary dwelling in the house of S. John<sup>1</sup> relates that one day, being overcome with yearning for her Son, she wept, and behold Michael, the great and wonderful angel of death, stood before her. He bore in His hand a wondrous palm plucked from paradise, which shed light from its leaves as pure jewels, and the angel gave it to her to be carried before her bier, for in three days she should be in paradise where her Son awaited her.

And Mary, filled with joy, lighted the lamps and prepared her bed, and laid herself down and waited; and while she lay praising God, that mighty power which had lifted the prophet Habakkuk, seized upon the apostles who were in

<sup>1</sup> Though tradition speaks of her dwelling in a house a short distance from Ephesus, her death is always said to have taken place at Jerusalem.

different parts of the world and brought them into the presence of the Mother of God. And Mary blessed them and thanked the Lord, and gave the palm to John, who wept bitterly, and Peter stood at the head of the bed, and John at the foot. In the watches of the night Jesus Himself came, and innumerable angels singing hymns of joy filled the chamber, and Jesus said: 'Arise, beloved, mine elect, come with me, my espoused, receive the crown destined for thee.' And Mary said: 'My heart is ready, for it was written of me that I should do Thy will.' And the soul of Mary left her body for the arms of her divine Son. But the body of Mary remained on earth, and a holy light came from it. The apostles took her up reverently, and, John carrying the celestial palm before her, they bore her to her grave. And Peter sang 'In exitu Israel.' The angels followed singing, and they laid the Virgin Mother in a tomb in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

But Jesus in heaven would not suffer the body which had borne Him to see corruption, and three days after Mary's death, in His own glorious manner, the Lord raised the body of Mary His mother, and the angels accompanied her heavenward, singing 'Who is she that riseth fair as the morning.'

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There are a few pictures and sculptures of the angel bearing the palm of promise to Mary. In Orvieto there is a fresco, and Orcagna has a bas-relief on a shrine in San Michele in Florence, but the most beautiful example is by Fra Filippo Lippi, where Mary, a majestic veiled figure, receives a taper, not a palm, from the hand of a kneeling angel. The taper is significant of death, it being a Catholic custom to place a taper in the hands of a dying person, by its light to suggest to the waning eyes the Light of the world, who is Christ.

A very curious and touching picture is by Taddeo di Bartolo, in the Campigli chapel in S. Francesco at Pisa. The Virgin is seated in a porticoed room, and is holding the hands of S. John. She is gazing at him with a lovely expression of tender farewell in her eyes. Around her are several of the apostles, and four more come borne through the air to bid her farewell.

He has another picture in Siena where Mary is seated and the apostles kneel before her, taking leave of her. Ottaviano Nelli has a picture of the same subject at Foligno, where the Virgin, seated holding the celestial palm, clasps the hand of one of the apostles, as the others crowd in at the door.

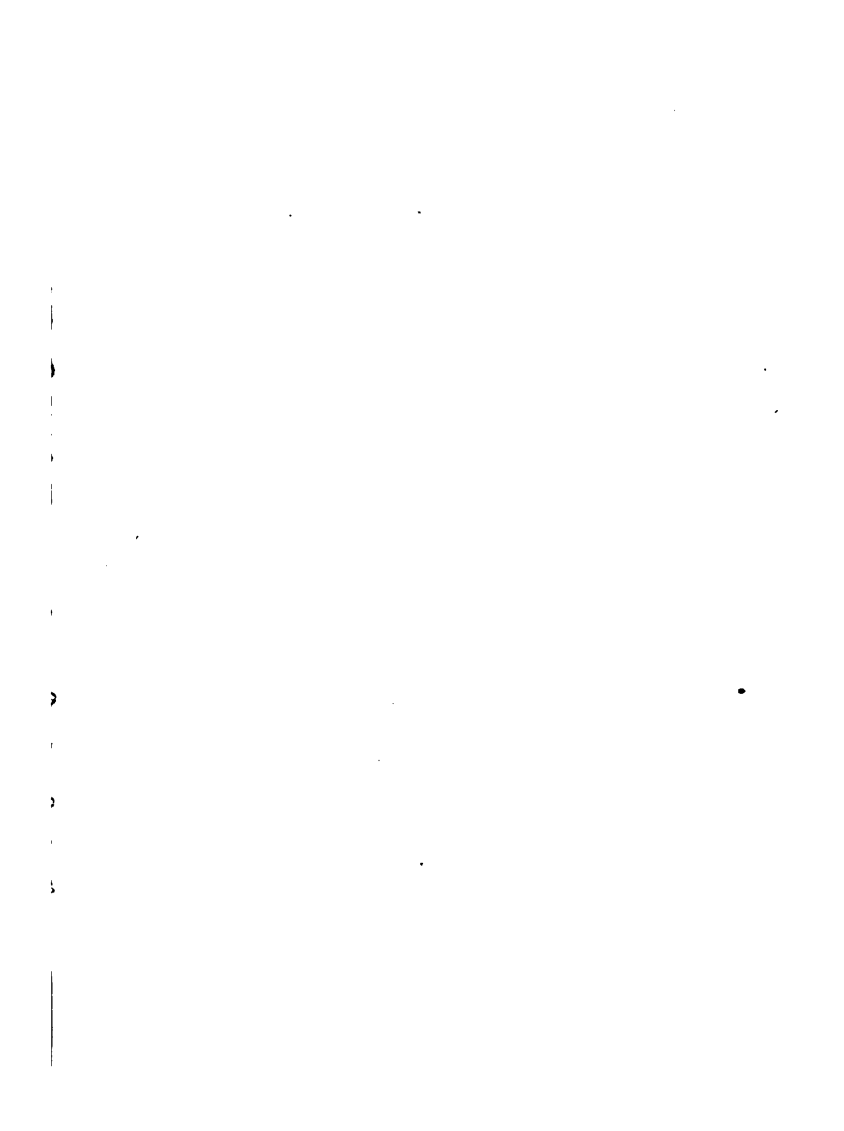
The actual death of Our Lady was a favourite

subject in early Italian art before the Paganism of the Renaissance had had time to invest death with that physical horror and loathsomeness which it so firmly imprinted on the susceptible Latin mind, that it has remained as a serious blot on the character of the great Latin nations to the present day. A deathbed such as Taddeo di Bartolo so reverently and lovingly painted was neither repulsive nor horrible, but a tender farewell of a gracious world and a passage to a more exquisite and perfect world of greater potentialities. He painted the death of Our Lady several times, and always she is the embodiment of a faithful soul surrounded by the love of friends, redolent of good deeds, and radiant with perfect hope.

In his picture in Siena, Christ in glory of heavenly light stands by the bedside and receives the soul of His mother in His arms, as her last breath leaves her lips. In another instance He is ascending carrying her soul amid a glory of angels, while the apostles gaze on her dead face.

Ottaviano Nelli has much the same treatment in his picture in Foligno, where S. Peter reads the prayers for the dying, and S. John holds the palm.

The mosaics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Palermo and in S. Maria in Trastevere





THE DEATH OF OUR LADY

*From the painting by Andrea Mantegna in the Prado, Madrid*

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all represent the passive figure lying meekly with folded hands, surrounded by the apostles, and Christ, unseen by them, attended by angels, holding the liberated soul in His arms. Fra Angelico preserves the same treatment in his picture in the Uffizi.

Cimabue and Giotto preserved the traditional treatment, the rules for which are laid down in the Greek manual, but Giotto makes two lovely angels stand at the head and feet of the pall on which Mary is lying.

Ghirlandajo has a fine fresco in S. Maria Novella in Florence, but the finest treatment is by Mantegna (Prado Gallery, Madrid).

Mary lies across the picture on a simple bier. Behind her, seen through a great arch, is a wide lagoon, calm as the sea of holy death, crossed by the Bridge leading to the shining City of God, seen in the dim distance. The shining of the sunny skies and the sense of the great spaces of the world and the illimitable heavens, into whose untrammelled space the liberated soul is fleeing, raises this picture above an ordinary deathbed scene. The worn, suffering, aged Mother lies calm as a lily on her bed. S. Peter, bearing the holy vessels in his hands which have contained the Bread of Life, looks in tender contemplation on her who bore within her the Life of the World.

The apostles sing around her, and S. John the Beloved bends over his adopted Mother to render her the last offices. Few pictures give so great a sense of air and space, and the solemnity and hopefulness of death, as this truly significant work of Mantegna's.

There is an immense contrast between this picture, with its sense of the illimitable, and Albert Dürer's woodcut of the same event, where Mary is propped up on huge pillows under a canopied and heavily-curtained bed. Her head falls with weakness, and S. John is placing in her languid hand a taper. The apostles are conversing together and not much intent on the dying woman, though two of them hold bowls, and one the holy water. It is just a commonplace middle-class deathbed, such as occurred commonly in any German town. There is another of Dürer's pictures, in which Christ holds the soul, and the angels hover round; but in the majority of the Northern pictures a sumptuous bedroom is one of the essential accessories that must not be ignored. The old simple Italian treatment, where the passage of the Beloved to her Beloved was the idea, never obtained much in the North.

Taddeo di Bartolo is one of the few artists who have painted the actual funeral of Mary. She is borne out of the gates of a city on the arms of the



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apostles, led by S. John, who is carrying the celestial palm.

There is a curious old Italian print of the same subject, showing the apostles bearing her on their shoulders over rocks, as if they were going into the valley of Jehoshaphat, where legend relates she was buried.

In Andrea Orcagna's alabaster sculpture in San Michele, Florence, he shows the apostles reverently lowering the placid body into a tomb, while S. John bends over and presses a last kiss on her hand. Christ, unseen, with the soul of His mother in His arms, blesses her body as it is lowered into the tomb. Above, Mary is seated in a vesica of glory upheld by angels.

Fra Angelico has an exquisite picture, where he shows her lying on a linen pall held by the apostles, who are lowering her into a tomb in a rocky valley. Above the earth, seen in a dreamy bluish light, her glorified soul, escorted by angels, is received by her Son. Giotto has much the same idea, only he makes angels hold the body.

The Church has never attempted to define the time, manner, or process of Mary's reunion with her Son; untheological minds are apt to ignore the undeniable fact that the mysteries of Eternity are uncircumscribed by the incidence of Time. It must be admitted by all Christians that the

creature chosen by God for His mother should, for eternal ages, sit on the heavenly throne prepared for those who love God. That her Son should anticipate the time of the reunion of body and soul is, according to mere human understanding, as probable as the rising of the bodies of the saints in Jerusalem on the night of His crucifixion.

The legend of the Assumption seems to have first appeared in the East,<sup>1</sup> and was ascribed to S. John the Evangelist. There is said to be an ancient sarcophagus with the Assumption sculptured upon it, and there is an account of a rich altar-cloth, made for S. Maria Maggiore in the eighth century, with the figure of Mary ascending on it. During the time of Charlemagne the feast was promulgated in the West, and an octave to the feast was added in 847.

The love of life made this a much more popular subject than the death of the Virgin, though for some time the deathbed is introduced below,

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<sup>1</sup> Misled by the name of the Festival of August 15th, ἡ Κοίμησις τῆς Θεοτόκου (the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God), many English writers have imagined that the Assumption is not believed by the Eastern Church, but a very slight examination of the Greek service-books would dispose of that fiction. The story is told quite plainly in the Synaxarion of the day in the Menaion, and the subject is even commoner in Eastern than in Western pictures.

## ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY 181

while the figure of Mary rises into the heavens above. These pictures and sculptures of early date are not, properly speaking, pictures of the Assumption at all, but rather of the receiving of the soul of the Virgin into her Son's arms at the moment of death. Theologically speaking the Assumption includes the advent of the Blessed Virgin's *body* and *soul* into heaven. The earliest pictures of the Assumption usually represent Mary enclosed in an aureole of light; sometimes this is supported by angels, sometimes, as in a beautiful picture by Masolino (Naples), the angels themselves form the vesica shape. There is an exquisite little illumination by Liberale da Verona in Siena, in which cherubs enclose her in the mystic shape, while Mary, with uplifted eyes and hands, is borne heavenwards.

Many of the early pictures of the Assumption illustrate a poetic legend which early grew around this most popular subject. It related that S. Thomas, being in India, did not arrive in time to see Mary before her burial, and he ardently desired to see again the face of the Lord's mother; so going with the apostles to her tomb, they opened it, and it was filled with lilies and roses; and lifting their eyes they saw Mary ascending, and she let fall her girdle at the apostles' feet, which they preserved and treasured as a precious

relic. After many changes it was eventually taken to Prato, where a chapel was erected over it, which was sumptuously decorated with frescoes by Agnolo Gaddi, illustrating the legend.

Most of the pictures of the Assumption may be regarded as visualised theological statements intimately affecting every Christian soul, for in them are expressed the eternal hope of the human race. Mary represents the soul. The tomb below filled with the sweet flowers of a charitable and virtuous life, sheds its perfume among the earthly companions who are still left in this world. The soul is drawn up with tenderest welcome by the Beloved, and heaven for ever encloses the faithful servant.

There is a very lovely picture by Taddeo di Bartolo where Christ draws her clasped hands into His with the most beautiful expression of tender love, while her body is borne up on the shimmering wings of angels ; her eyes, full of the tenderest ecstasy, gaze into His. The reunion of the Mother and Son was a subject which appealed irresistibly to the tender Sienese painters. There is another most beautiful example by Domenico di Bartolo, representing Christ, as young with the eternal juvenescence of heaven, with outstretched arms awaiting the glorious Virgin, clad in white, with gold embroideries,

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## ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY 183

rising triumphantly to Him. Very often only the heavenly aspect is presented ; Mary, and the angels, and the Son of God, or His Father ; and the earth is left out. Mary is nearly always with clasped hands and devout face ; her robe of white sprinkled with stars, her head veiled, the clouds are beneath her feet, stars encircle her head, and the angels fluttering with joy surround her. She herself is always meekly dignified, calm and holy, full of faith and love.

Matteo di Giovanni's 'Assumption' in the National Gallery (1155) is another good example of early Sienese work. It is painted on a gold ground, consequently there are no atmospheric effects, but each figure is perfect and complete in itself, beautifully conceived and lovingly executed. In the centre of the picture Our Lady in a red dress and white robe sits enthroned on the clouds, her hands joined in prayer, perfectly calm and devout. Cherubim and seraphim attend her, and rows of lovely angels singing, playing, and dancing.

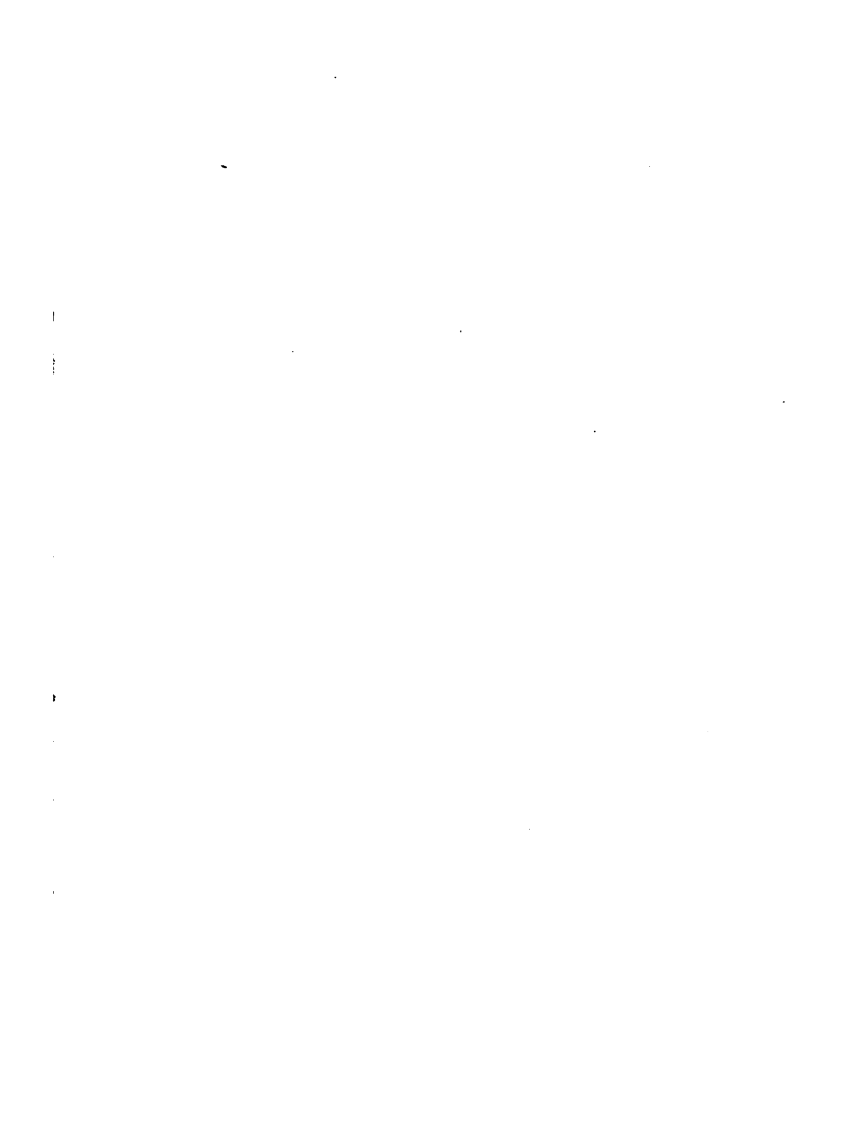
In Giovanni Pisano we get a new idea introduced, for he represents Christ as seated with Mary in an angel-borne vesica and embracing her with His arms. This unusual treatment was not often followed ; Christ is usually above her, either stooping forward to receive her, or, as in

Meneken's charming picture in Munich, drawing her clasped hands into His as she ascends to Him.

Perugino was among the last of the great artists to use the mystical vesica. With its abandonment came a greater freedom of action. The Virgin is no longer a being wholly absorbed in prayer, drawn upwards by the Divine Will; she springs up of her own accord, or even pauses to cast a lingering look on earth, as in Sodoma's and Palma's 'Assumptions,' where she is carefully lowering her girdle.

A most beautiful 'Assumption' ascribed to Botticelli is in the National Gallery (1126). There the three heavenly circles of seraphim and cherubim, glowing red with love, and clearest blue with spirit, circle round the Christ, who is raising His hand of blessing to His kneeling mother. Outside these inner spirits circle the angels, and then the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, saints, and martyrs kneel in worship. It is a truly magnificent conception of heaven opened to the eyes of the wondering church on earth, represented by the apostles beside the flowering tomb. A wide landscape of snowy distant mountains, lovely plains, winding rivers, and picturesque cities, seems to symbolise the whole round world

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THE ASSUMPTION

*From the painting by Titian in the Academy, Venice*



## ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY 185

lying beneath the dome of heaven. As a great poem this picture has few equals.

The intense desire to represent life does not reach its climax, according to my judgment, in the foreshortened sprawling woman of Correggio on the cupola of Parma Cathedral. There the whole confused mass of struggling arms and legs might in their inextricable confusion have been shot up from a cannon mouth, and this frantic, undisciplined, indecorous scramble cannot be said to express that orderly vibration which we call life, or that order which is supposed to be a law of Heaven.

But in Titian's glorious conception in Venice, Mary is instinct with life; of her own will she is rising in conformity to the Divine love which is drawing her into Itself. Her eyes are fixed on the Beatific Vision, her hands raised in the old catacomb attitude of rapt prayer. She rises like the morning, *quasi aurora consurgens*, jubilant, fresh, eternally young and eternally beautiful. To some critics the Tuscan robustness of figure is somewhat displeasing, and Titian's women have all more than a tinge of earth about them; but in this particular instance such cavilling may be ignored. Mary is surely the perfection of healthy womanhood, and her spiritualised

body should have the human joy of perfect health and life. This great picture sums up the development of all that is best in Italian art; the indecorous, sprawling, affected women, faintly disguised Junos and Venuses of inferior artists, need not be alluded to.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY IN HEAVEN

THE series of the life of Our Lady ends with her reunion with her Son, and depicts her receiving the crown of glory from His hands. As the detail of Time does not affect the soul which passes beyond the realms of Time, Mary's coronation is not only represented as an historical event, but as an eternal mystery affecting each faithful soul to whom the promise is made, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne, and he shall receive the crown of Life.'

This mystical meaning attached to the Coronation of Our Lady has doubtless made this subject so exceedingly popular in art. In many of the early designs this aspect is emphasised by Christ holding an open book on which appear the words, *Veni, Electa mea* ('Come, My chosen one'), which, while literally applying to the most 'blessed

among women' carries the invitation to any faithful soul. It is this mystical aspect which is shown in the earliest pictures.

In S. Maria Maggiore we have a fine instance. Mary is seated on a throne in the heavens beside her Son; she bends towards Him meekly, her hands lifted in adoration, while He places the crown upon her head. The nine choirs of angels surround them in adoration, and intertwined with the glory of the Godhead winds the mystical vine, emblematic of the Eucharist. Amid its leaves flutter little birds, emblems of the souls of men. SS. Peter and Paul and other saints are outside the angels, representing the Church in heaven, and down below, typifying the Church on earth, are figures of a Pope and Cardinal, enclosed within the mystic Jordan, the water of baptism.

Such a picture as this, to eyes that can see, conveys vast and beautiful ideas, and is a sermon in itself. There is something ennobling for us amidst the mists and pains of earth to look upwards to the firstfruits of our race in glory. Mary in heaven, is a breath of divinest hope to all her children.

It was so favourite a subject with the early Italian artists that it is difficult to make a selection. Lorenzo Monaco, Taddeo di Bartolo, Gentile da

## CORONATION OF OUR LADY 189

Fabrizio, and numerous others painted it. Giotto has two pictures: in one Mary sits beside her Son, and in the other she meekly kneels before Him. Taddeo Gaddi makes Christ bless His mother with one hand, while He crowns her with the other.

Generally speaking these early pictures represent the mystical meaning, and saints are represented in heaven with the angels. Sometimes, as in the case of Gentile da Fabriano (Brera Gallery, Milan), the angels only surround Christ and His mother, while the Eternal Father bends over both with outstretched hands.

There is an early French carving of Mary kneeling while she is crowned by the united action of the Trinity, all three in human forms, but this attempt to depict the Father and the Holy Ghost is never satisfactory.

It is not uncommon to represent the Eternal Father in the likeness of an old man bending over the Son, with the mystic Dove between them, and sometimes the Holy Dove only is introduced, hovering between Christ and His mother. Velasquez, in one of his few religious pictures, depicts the Eternal Father as a bald old man, a glaring instance of bad taste. As a rule, He is shown with the triple tiara, and bears a sceptre, or a crystal ball as a king. Sometimes

Christ is crowned with gold and jewels, sometimes with the crown of thorns, and very often He is bareheaded. The dress of the Virgin varies from a simple robe of white or blue to the most gorgeous embroidered jewelled garments; usually her long hair streams over her shoulders, but occasionally she is veiled.

To the pure serene soul of Fra Angelico, the contemplation of the Coronation of Mary in heaven must have been an ardent delight. His pictures on the subject might be described as spiritual rainbows. They glow with purest colour, and have no sign of earthliness to mar them. They are radiant dreams, full of the deepest spiritual exaltation. In his great 'Coronation' in the Uffizi, Christ and His mother are seated on clouds in a blaze of light. Her hands are folded, and she looks meekly at her Son. Angels (than whom nothing more heavenly pure has been depicted on this earth) circle round them, and below the angels are the Just made perfect, the Saints and Martyrs. The whole composition is in colour like a field of richest and most varied flowers under a brilliant sun.

Not so rapt into the highest heaven was Angelico when he painted his other great picture on the same subject, now in the Louvre; for there Christ sits on a throne which might have



THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY

*From the fresco by Fra Angelico in the Convent of S. Mark, Florence*





## CORONATION OF OUR LADY 191

been made with hands in that deeply artistic fifteenth century. It is raised on marble steps, on which stand ranks of angels playing musical instruments, while at the foot, gazing upward, kneel saints, prelates, and martyrs. Mary, with folded hands, kneels before her Son, who places the crown on her veiled head.

Quite different in treatment from these jewels of rich colour is his third picture, in S. Mark's. To my mind, in its pale soft tints of coloured white and delicate half-tones, it is even more lovely in colour, and far more ethereal than the more richly tinted panels. The two figures, clothed in heavenly white, sit in pale spiritual light, too ethereal for rays, or colour. Only the outer circles fade into the soft green blue of sunset tint. The cross in the nimbus of the Christ is the only strong colour in the whole composition. Mary stoops meekly forward, and the crown just leaves His fingers for her mild brow. Below, far below, kneel four Dominicans and S. Francis, rapt in the spirit, their dark robes showing in heavy contrast to the spirituality of heaven. No painter has ever depicted a 'mystery of the spirit' to the same extent as this serene and humble friar, whose every work was begun and ended in prayer, and who surely tasted heaven on earth.

Botticelli, who had a great feeling for the mystic meaning of the circle, constantly introduces the idea of the ceaseless round of prayer and praise in his circles of angels revolving endlessly round the Creator. See the fine example, possibly his, No. 1126, in the National Gallery. The circle, without beginning and without end, has been used from very early times as a symbol of Eternity, the idea of circle within circle corresponding to the old idea of the epicycles. This is most admirably expressed in his picture of the 'Coronation of the Virgin' in the Accademia in Florence. There the Virgin, bending meekly before the Eternal Father, is seated in the inmost heaven, while slowly revolving round them is the awful glory of the seraphim, and outside them a wonderful circle of angel forms scattering roses on the clouds. The completeness of the lower circle is wonderfully carried out by the exquisite little angel who is passing on the other side of the revolving circle, and who is looking up with a beautiful little face of adoration at the Eternal Father as he passes.

The 'Coronation of the Virgin,' by Luca della Robbia, a lunette over the door of the Ognissanti, Florence, is exceedingly decorative. The Eternal Father, wearing the triple tiara, crowns the Virgin, who is seated beside Him. Ranks of

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THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY  
*From the fresco by Fra Filippo Lippi in the Cathedral, Spoleto*

## CORONATION OF OUR LADY 193

✓ } angels, playing on trumpets and other musical instruments, hover in ranks across the heavens. Below them is a line of saints, symbolical of the Church.

There is a magnificent fresco of Filippo Lippi in the dome of the Cathedral at Spoleto. The lovely figure of Mary kneels before God the Father, Who blesses and crowns her amid the ranks of angels, who circle round them. Below the heavens are seen the hills of earth.

There is another of Fra Filippo Lippi's of this subject in the Accademia, Florence, which is very quaint in effect. Mary kneels before the Eternal Father, Who crowns her, and all around them are choir stalls filled with angels garlanded with roses and bearing tall white lilies in their hands, a charming conceit, very beautifully expressed. It is much less noble in conception than the Spoleto one, which gives the impression on looking up into it through the opening of the dome of heaven.

Both Ghirlandajo and Pinturicchio represent the, by that time, conventional idea. In the upper part of the picture Mary kneels in a blaze of light, and her Son crowns her amid angelic worship. Kneeling and standing on the earth below are worshipping saints. They are beautiful pictures, but they are not heavenly

visions. It is curious to observe how heaven was going out of fashion. The earlier men dwelt on the aspect of the Mother's crown of glory and the hope held out to the faithful, and they paid but little attention to the tomb in the earth. When we get to Albert Dürer, Raphael, Francia, and Sodoma, the empty tomb is in the foreground surrounded by wondering apostles, roses and lilies fill the tomb, and above in the clouds are Mary and Christ. Thus, as in the case of illustrations of Christ in art, the merely historical follows after the mystical and theological aspect.

Giulio Romano represents a scene of wild and frantic disorder among the apostles, who seem overcome with terror at the flower-filled tomb, and are quite oblivious of Mary being crowned above their heads amid fat infants who offer flowers.

In Francia's 'Coronation of the Virgin' she kneels humbly before the Eternal Father, who touches her head with a rod. Neither her Son nor the Holy Ghost are represented, but two adoring angels and a circle of cherubim. Below are figures of S. Anselm, S. Augustine, David, and Solomon, and a worshipping monk kneels in the centre before the flower-filled tomb. The inscriptions borne by the saints are, in S. Anselm's hands, 'Non puto esse verum amatorem

## CORONATION OF OUR LADY 195

Virginis qui celebrare respuit festam suae conceptionis.' That of S. Augustine, 'In caelo qualis est Pater, talis est Filius; in terra qualis est Mater, talis est Filius.' This is a purely theological treatment of the subject which is uncommon.

Judging from Sodoma's picture of the Coronation, the world has been happily spared many instances of later artists' glimpses into heaven, for a more undisciplined place it would be difficult to discover. The saints crowd about Christ and peer over His shoulder to see what He is doing, while Adam and Eve, S. John the Baptist and other personages by their confused struggles give anything but a pleasing idea of our heavenly home. The Divine Person of Christ is of no more account than any other member of a noisy crowd. Fat infants hovering in the air, and distracted winged musicians fail to give any air of devotion or spirituality to the scene. Not such a heaven as this, in a perpetual gale of wind, full of noise and confusion, do we desire for ourselves or our friends. Happily, perhaps, very few painters after this time concerned themselves with heaven.

Thus, amid the glory and happiness of heaven, we take leave of Our Lady in art. We see art as the handmaid of religion, depicting the life of

the meekest and most favoured of God's creatures, and weaving into such representations an inner meaning which applies to each one of us as the servants and children of God. Mary, from earliest Christianity, has stood as a symbol of the Church, and of the individual soul, whose salvation is in her Son. In the distaste for God, which is so emphatically the predominant feeling of the last three centuries, we have ceased to take much interest in heaven, but are more concerned with earth, so pictures of Mary in heaven no longer appeal to the great majority of men. Mary, as the peasant mother, earthy, stupid, often ugly, or sickly sentimentally pretty, is seen on the walls of our exhibitions, but of Mary in heaven, crowned by her Son, I know of no modern instance worthy of notice.



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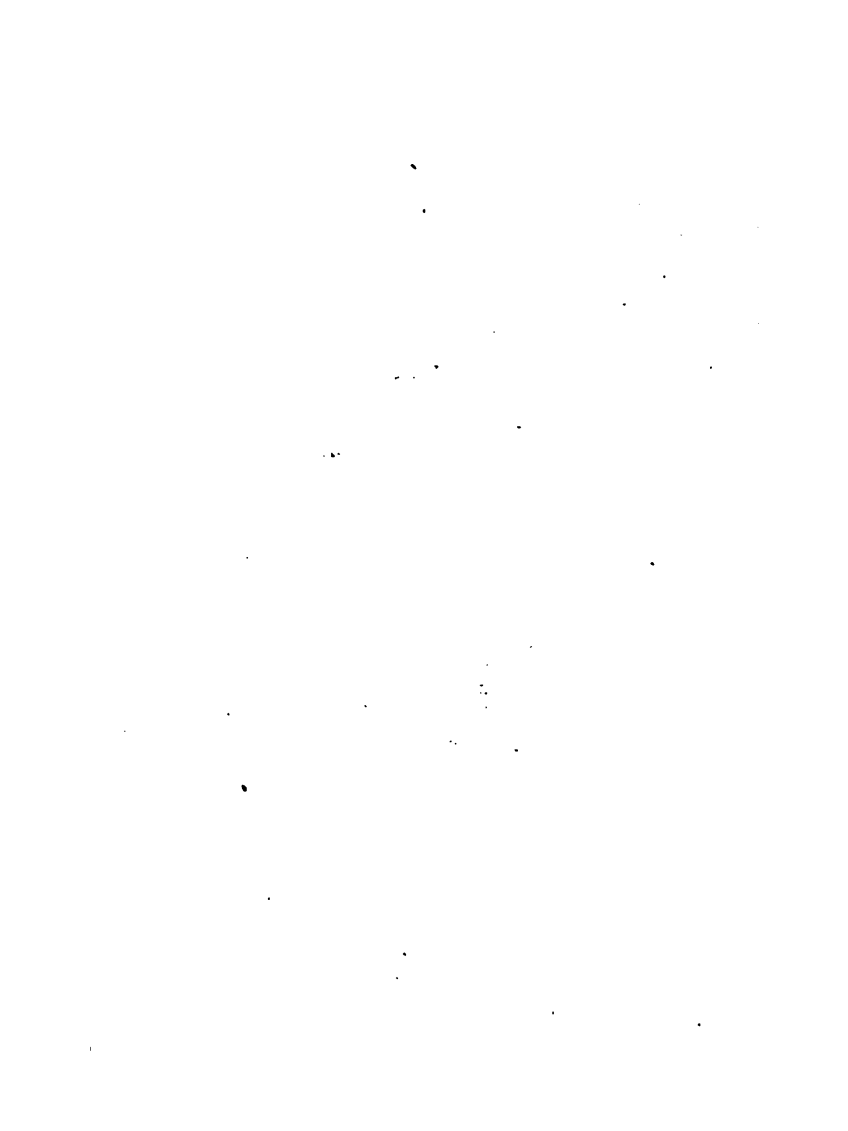
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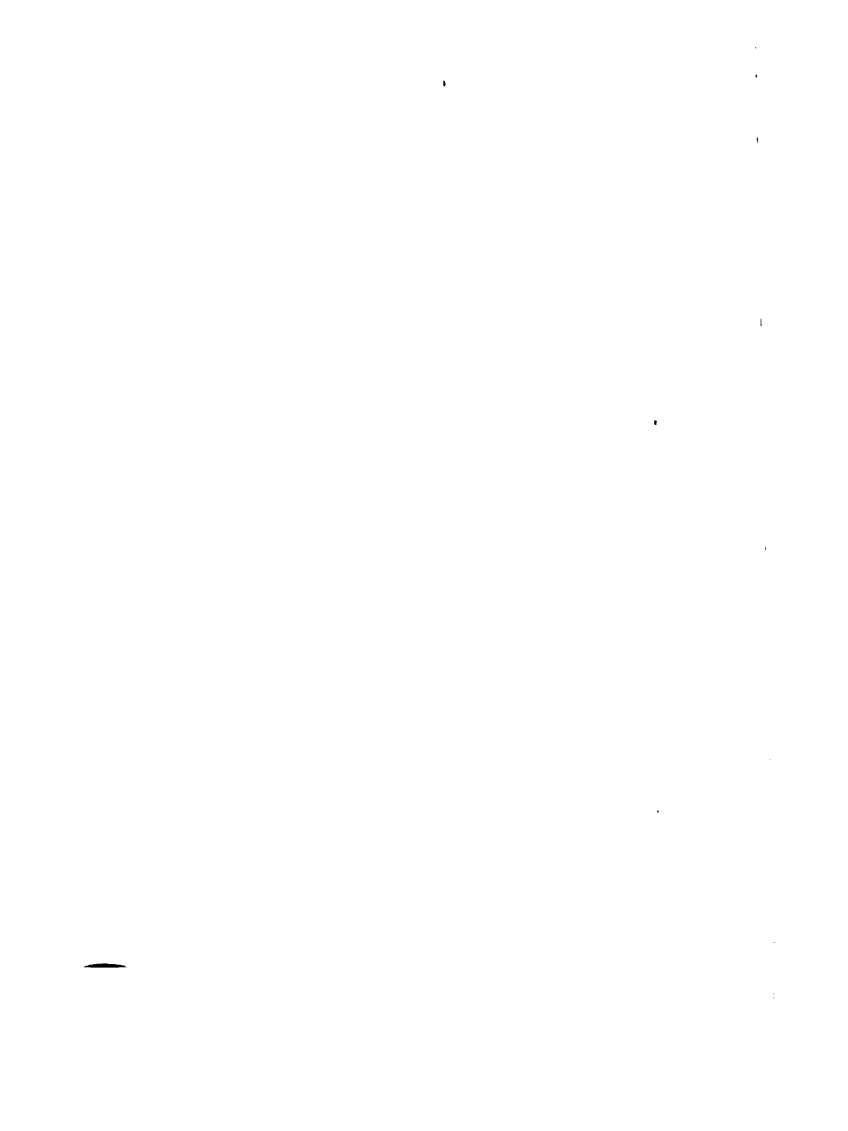
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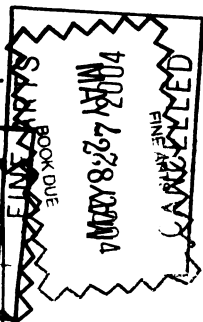
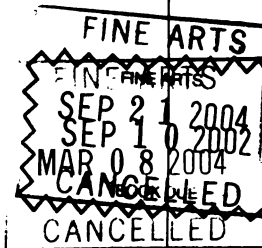
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